

Bhakti Sutra Mala

The Devotional Path to God-Realisation

[Roman Transliteration of Text, English Exposition, Elaborate Notes on
Ram Charit Manas; Dohawali; Adhyatma Ramayan;
Tripadvibhut Maharnaryan Upanishad; Krishna's Geeta—canto 12;
Narad Bhakti Sutra & Shandilya Bhakti Sutra]

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same ‘Parmatma’, the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

No creature is perfect; it’s foolhardy to claim so. The best of paintings cannot replace the original; the best of words cannot express the original emotions and sentiments. Even the Lord was not satisfied by one flower or one butterfly—he went on endlessly evolving and designing newer forms. So, I have done my best, I have poured out my being in these books. Honestly, I am totally incompetent—it was the Lord who had done the actual writing and had moved my fingers as if they were merely an instrument in his divine hands. But nonetheless, it’s a tribute to the Lord’s glory that he does not take the credit himself, but bestows it to them whom he loves as his very own. And to be ‘his very own’ is indeed an unmatched honour. However, I still beg forgiveness for all omissions, commissions and transgressions on my part that I may have inadvertently made. It’s the Lord’s glories that I sing, rejoice in, write on and think of to the best of my ability. I hope my readers will also absorb the divine fragrance effusing from the flowers representing the Lord’s books, enjoy the ambrosia pouring out of them and marvel at the Lord’s stupendous glories.

I submit this effort at holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram whom even Lord Shiva had revered and worshipped. And surely of course to Lord Hanuman who was a manifestation of Shiva himself. Finding no words to express my profound gratitude to Ram, I just wish to remain quiet, and let my silence do the speaking and praying on my behalf.

I hope the reader will find my book useful and interesting. Since English is an international language, this book will help the English speaking world to access this masterpiece of classical Indian scriptural text.

“He leadeth me! O blessed tho’t!

O words with heav’nly comfort fraught!

What-e’er I do, wher-e’er I be,

Still ‘tis God’s hand that leadeth me!” [A Hymn by: Joseph Henry Gilmore in 1862.]

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Preface

This Book titled “Bhakti Sutra Mala: The Devotional Path to God-Realisation” will describe in a straightforward, simple, lucid, succinct and a comprehensive manner what the eclectic and spiritually fulfilling concept of ‘Bhakti’ is.

The title of the Book has three words—viz. ‘Bhakti’, ‘Sutra’ and ‘Mala’. To begin with, let us see what these three words mean or imply.

The first word is ‘Bhakti’. It refers to the cardinal spiritual principle of having undiluted and true form of devotion, love and affection for the Lord God as a means to attain eternal peace, happiness, bliss and beatitude by the spiritual aspirant, as well as a means that provides liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to his soul.

The second word is ‘Sutra’. ‘Sutra’ means a ‘thread’, a ‘key’, a ‘code’, an ‘aphorism’, a ‘formula’, a ‘principle’. A ‘Sutra’ when applied to any body of knowledge refers to a basic formula or the key principle by understanding which one can easily grasp the wider body of knowledge. The Sutra is a ‘thread’ that strings together all relevant information pertaining to a given subject so as to make the subject easy to understand and implement in practice, sparing the seeker the trouble of delving deep into the endless volumes of the scriptures to pick up the knowledge he is seeking. Here that ‘knowledge’ pertains to how ‘Bhakti’, the spiritual path of devotion and love for the Lord God, can be practiced, what its many variants are, what the pitfalls to be guarded against are, and what its spiritual rewards are. A ‘Sutra’ is an indicator of something of profound importance and great significance. A wise man’s effort should be to understand what that indication is; he must look for the spiritual goal that Bhakti points to and leads to.

The third word is ‘Mala’, which means a ‘garland’. One of the many meanings of the word ‘Sutra’ is a ‘thread’. So therefore, this Book is like a garland of salutary spiritual wisdom symbolizing the many beads of excellent practical advice pertaining to Bhakti as has been expounded and enunciated in some of the great spiritual texts in Hinduism

that deal with this eclectic subject. The paractical advices on Bhakti given in this Book are extremely valuable for all spiritual aspirants who seek the nectar of eternal happiness, joy, peace, bliss and beatitude. The additional bonus that the spiritual seeker gets is attainment of eternity and liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation for his soul.

Now let us examine the concept of 'Bhakti' which is the central theme of this Book. Essentially, 'Bhakti' refers to the path of submission, devotion, love and faith in Lord God, the path that requires no formalities and rituals, a path that is absolutely easy to follow, and a path that grants the spiritual fruit that is difficult for even great sages and ascetics to obtain by practicing other spiritual methods advised in the scriptures.

There are many ways in which Bhakti can be practiced, such as to be fully devoted to the Lord God, to dearly love him and have deep affection for him, to do everything for the sake of the Lord as a selfless service to him, to offer everything to him, to have no other relationship with anyone in life and the world except the Lord God, to rely completely on the Lord for everything, to treat whatever comes to one in life as a gift from the Lord, and so on and so forth. All the principle ways of Bhakti have only one aim—which is to enable the practitioner to attain God-realisation, an aim that ultimately leads to attainment of eternal bliss and joy as well as liberation and deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death with its incumbent dilemmas, miseries and torments.

'Bhakti' (noun; feminine gender) is an Aphorism used for the expression of spiritual values associated with 'undiluted and steady devotion, submission, affection and love for God'. It is 'the devotional path to God-realisation' that entails intense spiritual love for the Lord and submission to Him, complete faith in the Lord, and being totally devoted to him and his selfless service. Any service done to mankind or to any other manifestation of the Lord is 'Bhakti' if it is done selflessly for the sake of the Lord and to please him.

The 'love' for the Lord that Bhakti implies is of the purest and of the truest kind; it is a transcendental, sublime and ethereal form of love for the Lord who is the dearest Being, the 'darling' of the devotee. This 'love' and 'affection' for the Lord has no grossness about it like in the case of one loving certain things in this world, or even loving one's near and dear ones that comes automatically to all living beings.

In a similar vein, 'service to Lord God' that Bhakti refers to means doing everything selflessly to please one's beloved Lord, and not for any other reason whatsoever.

Similarly, 'devotion' implies complete and total dedication and submission to Lord in all aspects and spheres of life.

'Bhakti' entails 'worshipping' the Lord with purity of heart, purity of mind and purity of love, having a natural and deep sense of devotion for the Lord, total submission to the Lord, serving the Lord selflessly, having unwavering and undiluted conviction and belief in the Lord, to be completely dedicated to the Lord, having reverence and veneration for the Lord, having no other solace, succour, hope and respite in this world except the Lord, treating oneself as a humble servant of the Lord and feeling fortunate at being able to serve the Lord, remembering the Lord at all times and

offering each and every deed done and action taken to the Lord without expecting anything in return, remaining unruffled and calm under all circumstances with the view that these situations, no matter what they may be, are the wishes of the Lord, and that it is the Lord himself who would take care of them, and therefore one has no right to get overly excited or perturbed over them. A true devotee remains calm and cheerful as he knows that the Lord is always there to look after him and take care of his welfare.

Verily indeed, ‘Bhakti’ is the simplest, the easiest and the most convenient way to God-realisation, to attain oneness with God, which is the ultimate and the highest quest of the soul of all living beings as it provides eternal rest, beatitude and felicity to it.

‘Bhakti’ in essence is a practical and convenient spiritual way by which a ‘Bhakta’ (a Lord’s devotee) can come closer to the Lord God in a very easy manner, without having to endure any of the hardships and face any of the uncertainties that are associated with other methods that are available to a spiritual aspirant to reach his or her spiritual goal—the goal of ‘God-realisation’.

The word ‘Bhakta’ means a person who practices Bhakti in its one or the other manifestation. An excellent ‘Bhakta’ would therefore be a person who practices Bhakti in its entirety. Anyone who intensely loves Lord God, has sincere faith in the Lord and devotion for him, who has totally surrendered himself or herself to God, for whom the Lord is the only succour and solace in life, who relies solely on Lord God for all needs, whether such needs pertain to the mundane and mortal world or to one’s spiritual destiny—such a person is called a ‘Bhakta’. Hence, the term Bhakta would mean a true devotee of Lord God.

A ‘Bhakta’ need not be a scholar of the scriptures, one who is an expert theologian, or one who is very particular about observing of rituals etc., or one who shows external signs of being a pious person. Say, what use are the scriptures and their knowledge if one does not find the goal he has set out in search of. In fact, Bhakti has nothing to do with any of the formalities associated with regular religion; it is a very personal matter between the devotee and his Lord God. If one is pious and loves one’s God, if one has complete faith in the Lord and worships him from the depth of one’s heart, if one is totally surrendered to the Lord God and relies on no one else but the Lord for anything and everything in life, if one’s only aim in life is God-realization, if one has true saintly characters, and is a pious soul—then nothing can prevent such a person from being dear to the Lord, and be the Lord’s ‘Bhakta’.

The stellar spiritual qualities of a true ‘Bhakta’ have been eumerated at a number of places in our scriptures. We shall be reading all about them in our present Book.

(a) The first such place is when sage Valmiki advises Lord Ram where to stay in ‘Ram Charit Manas’, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 128—to Doha no. 131. We shall read about them in this Book, in Chapter 1, section 1.3.

(b) The second instance is when Lord Krishna teaches Arjun about Bhakti Yoga in ‘Srimad Bhagvad Geeta’, Canto 12, verse nos. 13-20. This discourse is included in Chapter 5 of our Book.

(c) The third place is ‘Narad Bhakti Sutra’, which is Chapter 6 of this Book. Sage Narad lists the excellent virtues of Bhaktas in verse no. 82.

A reading of these verses would make it clear to the reader that a person who has such virtues as mentioned in the aforementioned scriptures is surely an embodiment of the Lord God himself, he is surely God-realised, and the Lord definitely lives in the heart of this pious devotee.

Verily, a ‘Bhakta’ is dearer to the Lord than a ‘Gyani’ who is a person of knowledge. It is because ‘Bhakti’ relates directly to the heart where the Lord himself resides in the form of the Atma which is pure Consciousness, as well as in the form of the virtues of love and devotion. This is clearly affirmed by Lord Ram, an incarnation of the Supreme Being, in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 46 wherein the Lord essentially advises the citizens of Ayodhya that though Gyan and Bhakti are the two paths by which a person can attain his or her spiritual goal in life, yet Bhakti is an easier path and dearer to the Lord as compared to Gyan. Once again, the Lord reiterated this fact to the crow-saint Kaagbhusund in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 86.

So it is obvious that ‘Bhakti’ and ‘Bhakta’ are the two sides of the same coin, they go together, and both are equally dear to the Lord. If a person has ‘Bhakti’ in him or her, that person is a true ‘Bhakta’ and is dear to the Lord like an infant child is to its parent. If a person has no ‘Bhakti’ for the Lord God in his or her heart, then such a person is surely not a ‘Bhakta’ by any count though he or she may have other excellent virtues, and therefore the Lord treats such a person like a neutral judge, rewarding or punishing a person according to the deeds done by the latter.

‘Bhakti’ can be practiced in different ways and it has many variants. This will be evident when we read the verses of Ram Charit Manas, Srimad Bhagvad Geeta and Narad Bhakti Sutra that have been fully quoted in this present Book.

Lord Ram has himself outlined some of the ways in which ‘Bhakti’ can be practiced when he has himself preached the principles that govern this spiritual virtue. The instances are the following:-

(a) To Laxman, his younger brother, in ‘Ram Charit Manas’, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 15 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-12 that precede it. This is included in Chapter 1, section 2.1 of our present Book.

(b) To Sabari, the old tribal woman who was the Lord’s ardent devotee, in ‘Ram Charit Manas’, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 36. This is narrated in Chapter 1, section no. 2.2.

And (c) to Vibhshan, the brother of the demon Ravana, the king of Lanka, in ‘Ram Charit Manas’, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 48 and Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it. This is cited in Chapter 1, section no. 3.3.

Lord Krishna has also outlined the many simple ways by which a person can practice ‘Bhakti’ in his ‘Srimad Bhagvad Geeta’, Canto 12, verse nos. 1-12 which is included in this Book.

‘Narad Bhakti Sutra’ is a wonderful book entirely dedicated to this theme of Bhakti. It describes this concept in its entirety, dealing with all its aspects from various angles. It is included as Chapter no. 6 of this Book. While expounding on Bhakti it lists eleven modes of practicing Bhakti in its verse no. 82. Briefly they are: love for the virtues of God and their glorification; love for God’s divine form; love for worshipping God; love for remembering God; love for serving God; treating God as one’s friend; child, beloved; total surrender to God; to be completely absorbed in his thoughts; and feel the pain of separation from God as one feels the pain of separation from one’s most dear loved one.

Some of the excellent qualities of a ‘Bhakta’ symbolized by the places where Lord Ram lives cheerfully are the following: Those who do not tire of listening to the divine stories and glory of the Lord God; who wish to see the Lord, be near the Lord, and enjoy his company; who always love to speak of the Lord, sing his glories, chant his divine name and praise him; who worship the Lord sincerely; who offer everything to the Lord and accept whatever comes their way as a gift of the Lord for them; who show respect to the Lord themselves and have high esteem for others who show honour to the Lord; who do not have such negative traits as lust, passion, anger, arrogance, haughtiness, pride, ego, delusions, greed, attachments, enmity, malice, conceit, pretensions etc.—i.e. any kind of spiritual deficiency that may cause sorrow and unhappiness to them; who have no other solace and succour in life except the Lord God, for the Lord is their only hope and assurance, their only destination and goal of life; who feel joy when they see others happy, and sorry at the misfortune of others; who follow the righteous path of noble conduct and thought; who are unpretentious and glorify you for all the good deeds done by them; and who love the Lord God unconditionally.

Similarly, some of the wonderful forms in which ‘Bhakti’ can be practiced are summarized as follows: (1) company of saints (where one can hear about the Lord’s virtues, glories, deeds, fames, holy name etc. alongside inculcating noble virtues and pious qualities which are characteristics of saintly persons); (2) to be fond of hearing, talking, discussing and preaching the divine story of the Lord and his glories; (3) to serve one’s Guru (moral preceptor) so that he can show the path to the Lord; (4) to sing and praise the glories and virtues of the Lord with a devoted mind and heart that are pure and free from any vested interest; (5) to repeat the holy name of the Lord and have unwavering and deep faith and belief in the Lord; (6) to practice exemplary self-control over one’s sense organs and natural urges, to be courteous, polite and pious, to desist from multifarious activities that cause vexation for the spirit and detract one from one’s chosen spiritual path, and to practice virtues that behoves of a saint; (7) to see the whole world as a manifestation of the Lord God, to see the Lord’s form in every single feature of this world, to be of a firm belief that there is nothing in this world that is not the Lord in that form; (8) to be ever contented and satisfied with whatever comes one’s way, not hankering for more, and never seeing other’s faults but examining one’s own shortcomings and trying to overcome them; and (9) to be simple-hearted, without a trace of conceit, deceit and pretensions, to have reliance upon the Lord and totally dependent upon him, and have the stellar quality of equanimity and dispassion by remaining calm and unmoved during joy and pain, feeling neither happy nor sad.

To this we can add other glorious virtues that would make ‘Bhakti’ perfect—such as remembering the Lord at all moments of life, serving his holy feet, adoring and worshipping him, honouring and revering him, offering prayers to him with all humility, total submission before him, offering everything to the Lord, treating him as a true friend and companion, singing his glories and chanting his holy name, remaining free from all attachments with the gross material world, and focusing one’s attention on the Truth of the Atma, the fact that it is pure Consciousness and one’s ‘true self’, and that this Atma is a representative of the Supreme Atma known as the ‘Parmatma’ or the Supreme Being who resides no where else but inside one’s own ‘self’.

It will be noted that the ultimate aim of both ‘Bhakti’ and ‘Yoga’ is the same—it is to bring about a union between the individual soul of the creature and the supreme Soul of creation, albeit the method or path adopted by these two systems are different. For whereas Bhakti lays stress on the virtues of total submission, love and devotion for Lord God who is usually revered in a tangible and visible form, Yoga takes the more arduous path of meditation and contemplation on the invisible form of the Lord that exists as pure consciousness that resides inside all living beings as their Atma or soul. So while Bhakti is easier for a common man to practice as it is relatively hassle free and does not much interfere with his daily life, Yoga needs greater effort and strict diligence by way of concerted practice of renunciation, detachment, self-control, equanimity, meditation, contemplation, acquisition of knowledge of the ‘self’, and such other spiritual practices that are quite stern.

The path of Bhakti has very little restrictions and rigidities, and it is easy to follow because the Bhakta (the devotee; the person who follows the path of Bhakti) relies on his Lord God for help all the way. On the other hand, the path of Yoga is a bit hard and difficult, and made more so because here the spiritual aspirant has to rely on his own strength and abilities to reach his goal.

In our present Book, we shall be reading some well known scriptural Texts in Hinduism on this wonderful spiritual subject, and these Texts are the following: (i) ‘Ram Charit Manas’ of Goswami Tulsidas—this is Chapter no. 1; (ii) ‘Dohawali’ of Goswami Tulsidas—this is Chapter no. 2; (iii) ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’ of sage Veda Vyas—this is Chapter no. 3; (iv) ‘Tripadvibhuti Maha Narayan Upanishad’ of the Atharva Veda tradition—this is Chapter no. 4; (v) ‘Srimad Bhagwad Gita’ of Lord Krishna—this is Chapter no. 5; (vi) ‘Narad Bhakti Sutra’ of the celestial sage Narad—this is Chapter no. 6; and (vii) ‘Shandilya Bhakti Sutra’ by sage Shandilya—this is Chapter no. 7.

These scriptural Texts together present a clear and comprehensive picture of the eclectic spiritual theme of Bhakti—what it constitutes of, how to practice it, and what its rewards are. By extension, they also outline the outstanding qualities of a Bhakta—a practitioner of Bhakti.

The Holy Bible is a sacred Text of unparalleled beauty and spiritual value. It is so clear in its meaning when it refers to the theme of Bhakti that it would be nice to quote some of the verses that clearly stress the importance of ‘Bhakti’ in their own unique way:

'I exhort therefore that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men--; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our saviour' (Timothy, 2/1-3); 'In him we live and move, and have our being' (Acts, 17/28), 'Trust in him at all times, you people, pour out your heart before him; for God is a refuge for us. (Psalms, 62/8); 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; This is the first and great commandment' (Gospel of St. Matthew, 22/37-38); 'And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment' (Gospel of St. Mark, 12/30); 'He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself; And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live' (Gospel of St. Luke, 10/27-29); and 'But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him' (Gospel of St. John, 4/23); 'For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God' (Romans, 8/38-39); 'For the scriptures saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed; for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved' (Romans, 10/11, 13); 'For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's' (Romans, 14/8); 'Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord' (Ephesians, 5/19); 'I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayer' (Philemon, 1/4); 'Love not the world, neither the things in the world; for if any man love the world, the love of Father is not in him' (1 John, 2/15).

The rewards of Bhakti are summarized in the Holy Bible in this way:

'And the Lord shall deliver me from evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever' (11 Timothy, 4/18); 'And God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work' (11 Corinthians, 9/8); 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us; even when we were dead in sins--; For by the grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God' (Ephesians, 2/4-5, 8); 'for the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness and faith' (Galatians, 4/22; 5/22); 'For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth' (Ephesians, 5/9); 'But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ' (Philippians, 4/19); 'For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which ye have shewed towards (him and) his name' (Hebrews, 6/10); 'So that we may boldly say: The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me {grant of fearlessness}' (Hebrews, 13/6); 'Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; Casting all your cares upon him; for he careth for you' (1 Peter, 5/6-7); 'And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him; (1 John, 4/16); 'Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God' (Romans, 8/39).

The importance of confession in Bhakti—‘If we confess our sins, he (the Lord God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness’ (1 John, 1/9).

The self-sacrifice of a true and sincere ‘Bhakta’, a devotee of the Lord, is this—‘I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service’ (Romans, 12/1).

The true character of a ‘Bhakta’ can be summarized as follows: ‘Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good’ (Bible, Romans, 12/9-21); ---‘Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful; (Colossians, 3/12-15) --- ‘Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever’ (1 John, 2/15-17).

By including all these excellent Texts under one single cover in the present Book, my endeavour is to present to the reader a comprehensive philosophical view of the spiritual theme of ‘Bhakti’ that is all-inclusive and complete in itself.

All learners need an easy to read and understand guide-book to help them grasp the essentials of the subject of their interest. Similarly on the spiritual path too an aspirant would need guidelines and a road map to show him the correct way forward, to tell him what to do in order to achieve success in his spiritual endeavours and warn him against the various pitfalls and how to avoid them, to provide him with some benchmarks against which he can judge his success, and at the same time tell him the wonderful reward that awaits him if he follows the instructions properly.

One crucial point is to be noted here. If a wise person wishes to reach a goal in life, he will first research on the goal itself, then on the various options available to him to fulfill his desire, and finally decide for himself which path is best for him.

Once he is convinced that a particular path or mean is the best way he can use to reach his desired goal in life, he will then be able to follow the selected path faithfully, free from distractions arising out of confusions and doubts; he will follow the path with zeal and commitment. This will ensure his success. On the other hand, if he merely goes on a path because someone has said it is good, then the chances of falling on the way and getting fidgety and confused are pretty high.

To wit, in the realm of spiritualism, this method also applies to a devotee who wishes to reach his Lord God and attain eternal bliss and beatitude. A wise devotee is one who first convinces himself in no uncertain terms that Bhakti is the best way to attain his God, and then he follows the instructions contained in the different Sutras to reach his desired spiritual goal.

A wish to add a word of caution here: When the phrase “Lord God” is used anywhere in the text, it refers to the ‘Supreme Being’ whom the devotee worships. This Supreme Being is the Lord as well as the God for the devotee. A person may have other Lords and Masters in this world to whom he is obliged to pay his respects to and be obedient to because of exigencies of life in the world; and similarly there are hosts of other Gods in this creation too before whom a creature is obliged to bow and keep them in good humour. But the person does so only because he is under obligation to honour them and obey them for practical reasons even if he does not want to do so, for antagonising such Gods, Lords or Masters would create unnecessary problems for him which he can easily avoid by simply keeping them happy and pleased. But the ‘Lord God’ is someone for whom love, respect and adoration comes spontaneously from within the heart of the person, for this ‘Lord God’ represents the Supreme Being who is the person’s loving Father and Redeemer, his true Friend and his spiritual Destiny. This ‘Lord God’ is the one whom Jesus Christ referred to as “My Father”, and who is called “Brahm” by the Upanishads and the Vedas. Therefore, when the term “Lord God” is used in our text, the reader must clearly understand that it is referring to the Supreme Being who has manifested in the particular form that is loved, adored, revered and worshipped by the individual devotee. It may be the Lord’s visible form with attributes (such as those of Lord Ram or Lord Krishna), or the Lord’s invisible cosmic form that is known as pure Consciousness that has no attributes or discernible forms (such as Brahm). It is the devotee’s choice as to how he would prefer to worship and love the Lord God who is the Almighty Supreme Being and whose primary form is nothing but ‘pure cosmic Consciousness’. It is only the Supreme Being who is worthy of having devotion for, who is worthy for offering worship and saying prayer to; it is only the Supreme Being who can provide ultimate bliss and beatitude to the creature; it is only the Supreme Being who can grant liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the living being. Hence, ‘He’, the Supreme Being, is not merely a ‘God’ or a ‘Lord’, but the “Lord God”!

I finally wish to say that by writing this book I am only trying to selflessly serve my beloved Lord God and obey his divine command in the best possible way I can think of, as through these books I try to spread the ‘good word of the Lord’ and make the pitcher of excellent nectar of spiritualism contained in the ancient Indian scriptural texts for which they are so famed, but unfortunately this nectar was restricted due the language barrier, available to the world in the English language so that they can be easily accessed by even the common man. I will feel happy if even a few souls benefit from my book.

It is a service that I am rendering to my beloved Lord Sri Ram. And I pray to the Lord to bless me as well as my esteemed reader with his divine grace and mercy!

I have tried to do my best in writing this Book, but everyone must remember that, firstly, I am an ordinary human being like the rest of us, with all the limitations that a man has, and that secondly I am not a scholar of any worth who can write anything relying on his own abilities, for I just did what the Lord wished to be done through me, and I am just like a pen moving on a blank piece of paper!

So therefore, there may be errors of omissions and commissions on my part, but I earnestly request all my readers to overlook these small things like one would ignore everything else when one's mind is focused in the search of some great hidden treasure. The esteemed reader is requested to concentrate on the spiritual nectar that flows from the pages of this Book in order to feel the joy of spiritual fulfillment.

Meanwhile, I would like to thank Sri Somil Bharti for helping me in this work of the Lord by doing the Roman Transliteration of the original Texts for me that have been quoted in this Book. God bless him!

And finally, 'Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved; Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds' (The Holy Bible, Philippians, 4/1, 4-7).

Amen!

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Bhakti Sutra Mala

The Devotional Path to God-Realisation

[Roman Transliteration of Text, English Exposition, Elaborate Notes on
Ram Charit Manas; Dohawali; Adhyatma Ramayan;
Tripadvibhut Maharnaryan Upanishad; Krishna's Geeta—canto 12;
Narad Bhakti Sutra & Shandilya Bhakti Sutra]

Chapter 1

‘Ram Charit Manas’ of Goswami Tulsidas

In this Chapter we shall read about the concept of ‘Bhakti’ as it has been described and expounded in the grand classical book in Hinduism that is known as ‘Ram Charit Manas’. It is the most revered version of the epic story of Lord Ram who was an incarnation of the Supreme Being on earth, and it was penned by the renowned saint-poet Goswami Tulsidas. This book is a masterpiece of devotional literature that commands the greatest of reverence amongst the masses in India. It is one of the greatest books of all times and stands tallest amongst all the versions of the story of Lord Ram that are universally known as the ‘Ramayana’.

For the purpose of our Book whose theme which is ‘Bhakti’, we shall select only those verses of Ram Charit Manas that directly deal with it.

(1) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand:

(1.1) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 113:

जिन्ह हरि कथा सुनी नहिं काना । श्रवन रंघ अहिभवन समाना ॥ २ ॥
नयनन्हि संत दरस नहिं देखा । लोचन मोरपंख कर लेखा ॥ ३ ॥
ते सिर कटु तुंबरि समतूला । जे न नमत हरि गुर पद मूला ॥ ४ ॥
जिन्ह हरिभगति हृदयँ नहिं आनी । जीवत सव समान तेइ प्रानी ॥ ५ ॥
जो नहिं करइ राम गुन गाना । जीह सो दादुर जीह समाना ॥ ६ ॥
कुलिस कठोर निटुर सोइ छाती । सुनि हरिचरित न जो हरषाती ॥ ७ ॥

caupāī.

jinha hari kathā sunī nahiṁ kānā. śravana randhra ahibhavana samānā. 2.
 nayanānhi santa darasa nahiṁ dēkhā. lōcana mōrapaṅkha kara lēkhā. 3.
 tē sira kaṭu tumbāri samatūlā. jē na namata hari gura pada mūlā. 4.
 jinha haribhagati hṛdayam̐ nahiṁ ānī. jīvata sava samāna tē'i prānī. 5.
 jō nahiṁ kara'i rāma guna gānā. jīha sō dādura jīha samānā. 6.
 kulisa kaṭhōra niṭhura sō'i chātī. suni haricarita na jō haraṣātī. 7.

Those who have not heard the glories of Lord Ram, their ears are noting but dark holes where snakes live. Those who do not bow their heads before their Guru (spiritual teacher) and Lord Hari (Lord God), their heads are like a bitter guard. Those who do not establish Bhakti for the Lord in their hearts, their lives are worthless and no better than corpses. Those who do not sing the glories of Lord Ram, their tongues are like those of frogs (who croak meaninglessly). Those whose hearts do not exult upon hearing the stories of the Lord and his glories, such hearts stubborn and emotionless are like hard stone.

(1.2) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 119:

बिबसहुँ जासु नाम नर कहहीं । जनम अनेक रचित अघ दहहीं ॥ ३ ॥
 सादर सुमिरन जे नर करहीं । भव बारिधि गोपद इव तरहीं ॥ ४ ॥

bibasahum̐ jāsu nāma nara kahahīm. janama anēka racita agha dahahīm. 3.
 sādara sumirana jē nara karahīm. bhava bāridhi gōpada iva tarahīm. 4.

“If a man utters the holy name of the Lord even under compulsion or when he is in a helpless state, then also the horrifying effects of sins committed by him over countless previous lives are made null and void (i.e. they are all neutralized). Similarly, those who remember the Lord God, they are able to cross this mundane existence as easily as one steps over a small, shallow depression made on the ground by a cow’s hoof.”

(2) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand:

(2.1) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 72:

When Laxman, the younger brother of Lord Ram, came to know that the Lord has been ordered by his father king Dasrath and step-mother Kaikeyi to go to the forest for fourteen years, he decided to accompany the Lord. Lord Ram tried to persuade him to stay back in the capital city of Ayodhya, but Laxman refused and said he will accompany the Lord at all costs.

Laxman’s answer to Lord Ram summarizes how a true Bhakta feels in his heart towards his beloved Lord; it tells us what true devotion, submission and love is.

चौ०. दीन्हि मोहि सिख नीकि गोसाईं । लागि अगम अपनी कदराई ॥ १ ॥
नरबर धीर धरम धुर धारी । निगम नीति कहूँ ते अधिकारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dīnhi mōhi sikha nīki gōsā'īm. lāgi agama apanī kadarā'īm. 1.
narabara dhīra dharama dhura dhārī. nigama nīti kahum' tē adhikārī. 2.

Laxman said to Lord Ram: 'Oh Lord! Whatever advice that you have given to me is indeed sound and proper, but it is due to the weakness of my heart (that is driven by the compulsion of love for you that is deeply imbedded in it) that I feel unable to follow it, as it seems absolutely impractical to me¹. (1)

Those who believe in upholding the principles of right conduct and propriety, those who are champions in the philosophy of the Vedas and the gospels of other scriptures, and profess strict adherence to them—such people are noble and honourable indeed². (2)

[¹Oh Lord, you ask me to stay back at Ayodhya, which means separation from you and not being to serve you at all the moments of my life. Well Lord, no matter how good this advice may be for others, and no matter what adversity would befall me due to my determination to follow you wherever you go, I am firm in my mind and heart that I would cope with everything but not the pain of separation from you. No; I am sorry that I am unable to obey you on this single point. Lord, punish me in any way you like, but I will not follow this one advice of yours, for my heart wrenches in pain by the mere thought of separation from you! Lord, I can't live even for a fraction of a second without you, and life is meaningless sans you for me. No Lord; I won't leave you no matter what comes!]

²But oh Lord, when have I ever claimed to be such a person? I don't care if the world would denounce me for not obeying the Lord, especially when you have cited sound reasons why I should stay back at Ayodhya, such as to look after the kingdom and its subjects in your absence. But oh Lord, principles of righteous conduct are a matter to be observed by noble men who are concerned about their reputation and destiny, for they are not meant for a humble man who has only one destiny which is to serve his Lord, a man who has lost his heart to the Lord and whose life is centered around his love and submission for his beloved Lord—for don't you know that 'love is blind'? Say, how can a blind man walk without a stick? Lord, for me you are this 'blind man's stick'! Therefore, nothing doing; I am coming along with you!]

मैं सिसु प्रभु सनेहँ प्रतिपाला । मंदरु मेरु कि लेहिं मराला ॥ ३ ॥
गुर पितु मातु न जानउँ काहू । कहउँ सुभाउ नाथ पतिआहू ॥ ४ ॥

mair̥ṁ sisu prabhu sanēham̐ pratipālā. mandaru mēru ki lēhir̥ṁ marālā. 3.
gura pitu mātu na jāna'um̐ kāhū. kaha'um̐ subhā'u nātha pati'āhū. 4.

Oh Lord! I am like an infant you have been raised in the cradle symbolized by the Lord's love for me. [Like a child who has never set foot on the ground because his mother loved him so much that she always kept him close to her bosom, you have always loved me so dearly that I never could imagine a world separate from you! Your love has nourished me like a mother's milk nourishes the child.]

Say, can a little swan ever lift a heavy mountain such as Mt. Mandarachal or Mt. Meru? [To wit, just as it is impossible for a small bird like a swan to lift a heavy mountain, so it is impossible for me to carry the burden of a life without you. It's unimaginable, impractical, and untenable.] (3)

Oh Lord! I tell you most sincerely and honestly, believe me, that except you I don't know anyone else, I don't have nor do I know of any other relationship, whether it is a Guru (preceptor and teacher), a father or mother, or for that matter anyone else. [In all sooth and without gainsay oh Lord, the only relationship I am aware of, the only kin I have in this world, and the only person to whom I am obliged—is you.] (4)

जहँ लगि जगत सनेह सगाई । प्रीति प्रतीति निगम निजु गाई ॥ ५ ॥
मोरे सबइ एक तुझ स्वामी । दीनबंधु उर अंतरजामी ॥ ६ ॥

jaham̐ lagi jagata sanēha sagā'ī. prīti pratīti nigama niju gā'ī. 5.
mōrē saba'i ēka tumha svāmī. dīnabandhu ura antarajāmī. 6.

Oh Lord, whatever sort of ties or relationships that are based on confidence, faith, love and affection that exist in this world, and which have been lauded by the Vedas (5)—for me all such ties and relationships are centered in you. For me, you are the only kith and kin in this world. Oh Lord, you are a friend of the meek and the humble, and the one who knows the inner thoughts of all as you dwell inside all. Therefore, you must be aware of the truth of my statement. [To wit, oh Lord, since you know the inner thoughts of all, and nothing is hidden from you, so you must know that I am truthful in what I say to you.] (6)

धरम नीति उपदेसिअ ताही । कीरति भूति सुगति प्रिय जाही ॥ ७ ॥
मन क्रम बचन चरन रत होई । कृपासिंधु परिहरिअ कि सोई ॥ ८ ॥

dharama nīti upadēsi'a tāhī. kīrati bhūti sugati priya jāhī. 7.
mana krama bacana carana rata hō'ī. krpāsindhu parihari'a ki sō'ī. 8.

The noble virtues of Dharma and Niti (principles of noble conduct and righteousness, of ethics and morality, of piety and propriety) should be preached to someone who wishes to gain merit, glory and acclaim in this world, or desire to attain some noble goal in life or some sort of good fortune. (7)

But tell me oh merciful and compassionate Lord, is it proper and advisable for you to abandon someone who is committed to serve your holy feet (and to have deep love and affection for you) by his thought, deed and words?’¹ (8)

[¹Laxman essentially outlines the qualities of a true ‘Bhakta’ here. A true devotee of the Lord should have the same thoughts and emotions as Laxman had for Lord Ram. A true Bhakta’s life centers on his beloved Lord, and his only aim in life is to serve the Lord God whom he loves from the core of his being. Bhakti entails the truest form of devotion, faith, love, affection and commitment towards the Lord God like Laxman has depicted here for Lord Ram.]

(2.2) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 93 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it:

On his way to the forest, Lord Ram reached a place called Sringerpur. It was the Lord’s second day out of the capital city of Ayodhya. In the night, the Lord and his wife Sita slept on bare earth, while Laxman kept vigil by staying awake the whole night. During this night, Nishad, the head of the boatman community who had welcomed the Lord at Sringerpur, sat down with Laxman and expressed his sadness at the Lord’s coming to the forest for fourteen years. Laxman then preached him on some of the great metaphysical principles, about the need to observe total detachment from all emotions and feelings related to this gross world, about the need to overcome delusions and ignorance so that true wisdom can dawn upon the seeker, and enlightened him about the true nature of Lord Ram as a manifestation of the Supreme Being who is beyond grief and sufferings.

Laxman then told Nishad that the best thing for a person to do to ensure his spiritual welfare, the best form of meritorious deed that a person can do to attain an exalted destiny for his soul, is to have undiluted love and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram, to be devoted to the holy feet of the Lord by one’s mind and heart, thoughts, deeds and words. This last observation, in verse no. 6, is the highlight of this sermon of Laxman.

चौ०. अस बिचारि नहिं कीजिअ रोसू । काहुहि बादि न देइअ दोसू ॥ १ ॥
मोह निसाँ सबु सोवनिहारा । देखिअ सपन अनेक प्रकारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa bicāri nahim̐ kīji'a rōsū. kāhuhi bādi na dē'i'a dōsū. 1.
mōha nisām̐ sabu sōvanihārā. dēkhi'a sapana anēka prakārā. 2.

You must not grieve by keeping in mind that this world is like a great delusion, and sufferings or joys in it are only imaginary. Therefore, you should neither be angry at anyone nor blame anyone for anything or any misfortune in this world. (1)

Everyone appears to be sleeping in a night symbolized by delusions, and during this sleep they have dreams that though seem to be so true but are simply imaginary by their very nature.¹ (2)

[¹During the point of time when a person is dreaming in his sleep, he thinks that it is a real world for him. For instance, if he dreams of being a beggar or a king, then for those moments when he so dreams he does become a beggar or a king and behaves like one. But as soon as he wakes up he suddenly realizes that all that was a ‘mere dream’, i.e. it was false. Similarly, for a wise man this mortal and gross world is merely a dream which would end one day. So he focuses on understanding the reality of life that transcends this mundane existence. This ‘reality’ is the Truth that a wise man seeks. And this ‘Truth’ is known as Atma, the pure Consciousness that is different from the gross physical body of the person, and it is an eternal entity; it is knowledgeable and bliss personified. So therefore, where is the cause of grief and sorrow and suffering in such an entity?]

एहिं जग जामिनि जागहिं जोगी । परमारथी प्रपंच बियोगी ॥ ३ ॥

जानिअ तबहिं जीव जग जागा । जब सब बिषय बिलास बिरागा ॥ ४ ॥

ēhiṁ jaga jāmini jāgahiṁ jōgī. paramārathī prapañca biyōgī. 3.
jāni'a tabahiṁ jīva jaga jāgā. jaba saba biṣaya bilāsa birāgā. 4.

In this gross world which is like a night of darkness (delusions), only ascetics and mystics who are wise, self-realised, detached from the world and its sensual charms, those who long to attain the ultimate Truth and endeavour to reach the final destination that would provide the with liberation and deliverance from mundane existence, are the ones who are deemed to be wide awake and free from the fear of darkness that horrify ordinary creatures in this world. (3)

Verily indeed, a creature should be regarded as being ‘truly awake’ in this symbolic night of delusions in this world only if he is totally free from any attachment with this world, if he has exemplary renunciation in him and is not at all tempted by any of the sensual charms of this gross mundane world, and if he is not interested in gratifying his sense organs. (4)

होइ बिबेकु मोह भ्रम भागा । तब रघुनाथ चरन अनुरागा ॥ ५ ॥

सखा परम परमारथु एहू । मन क्रम बचन राम पद नेहू ॥ ६ ॥

hō'i bibēku mōha bhrama bhāgā. taba raghunātha carana anurāgā. 5.
sakhā parama paramārathu ēhū. mana krama bacana rāma pada nēhū. 6.

As soon as one develops true spiritual wisdom, delusions and ignorance run away. And as soon as delusions are eliminated, one develops affection and love for the holy feet of Lord Ram (Lord Raghunath). (5)

Oh friend! The best way to attain one's spiritual goal in life is to have undiluted and sincere love and affection on the holy feet of Lord Ram by one's mind and heart (i.e. by one's thoughts and emotions), by one's actions and deeds, and by one's words (spoken or written). In all sooth, this is the best form of spiritually meritorious life that one can lead¹. (6)

[¹This verse emphasizes that the *best thing* to do for one's spiritual welfare is to have unwavering and the purest form of devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram—i.e. to serve the Lord and have full faith in him. All the faculties of a man, such as his Mana (mind and heart), his Karma (deeds and actions), and his Bachan (words) should be directed towards this end.]

राम ब्रह्म परमार्थ रूपा । अबिगत अलख अनादि अनूपा ॥ ७ ॥
सकल बिकार रहित गतभेदा । कहि नित नेति निरूपहिं बेदा ॥ ८ ॥

rāma brahma paramāratha rūpā. abigata alakha anādi anūpā. 7.
sakala bikāra rahita gatabhēdā. kahi nita nēti nirūpahim bēdā. 8.

Verily indeed, Lord Ram is a personified form of the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being and the Lord of the world. The Lord is a personified form of the ultimate Truth in creation, and the only spiritual destination for the soul.

The Lord is beyond comprehension (*abigata*); his true form is invisible to the gross eye of the creature's body as the Lord's essential form is extremely subtle and sublime (*alakha*). He is without an end (*anādi*), without any comparison and parallel (*anūpā*), free from all faults and taints (*sakala bikāra rahita*), and of an immutable and indivisible form (*gatabhēdā*).

The Vedas have constantly and consistently used the term 'Neti-Neti' to refer to the Lord. [The term 'Neti-Neti' means neither this nor that. To wit, this means that nothing can ever sufficiently describe the Lord in entirety. All the terms used to indicate any given quality of the Lord are correct, but none of them can be a definite indication of the Lord's glory as the glory of the Lord goes much beyond the scope of any given word or group of words.] (8)

दो०. भगत भूमि भूसुर सुरभि सुर हित लागि कृपाल ।
करत चरित धरि मनुज तनु सुनत मिटहिं जग जाल ॥ ९३ ॥
dōhā.

bhagata bhūmi bhūsura surabhi sura hita lāgi kṛpāla.
karata carita dhari manuja tanu sunata miṭahim jaga jāla. 93.

That same Supreme Lord of the world has adopted the form of a human being in the body of Lord Ram for the welfare of his devotees, mother earth and its inhabitants, Brahmins or elders and wise members of the society, as well as for the Gods in heaven. [All of them were tormented by evil forces in this world, so the Lord came down to eliminate such forces and restore the rule of law in this world.]

In his human form, the Lord does so many things. By hearing about his deeds and his divine life, a creature is able free himself from the snares of this delusory world. (Doha no. 93)

(2.3) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 128—to Doha no. 131:

When Lord Ram was on his way to the forest, he visited sage Valmiki and sought his blessings. During the conversation that ensued between the Lord and the sage, Valmiki has outlined the places where Lord Ram should abide. Obviously all the places where the Lord dwells are those that are pure, holy and pious, for the Lord cannot live in a place that is corrupt and unholy by any count. By corollary it means that all these places where Lord Ram would reside are indicators of 'Bhakti' because only a practitioner of Bhakti, i.e. a 'Bhakta' or a devotee of the Lord, can have these wonderful qualities in him, for otherwise that place cannot be pure enough for the Lord to live there even for a second.

Looking at all the places described as being the abode of Lord Ram, we come to the conclusion that they represent epitomes of devotion, spiritualism, righteousness, ethics and probity. No doubt then that those who seek the Lord at these places are led down the good path towards righteous and noble living. These indicative places are our guide to leading a noble and virtuous life, because when we seek God at these places, we tend to constantly remind ourselves that God does not live in an impure, unholy, vicious, corrupted and deceitful environ. It is a sort of 'elimination process' whereby we exclude all the places which are dark, un-righteous, devoid of good and probity because God – who is pure and splendorous like the sun which lightens the world – cannot dwell in spiritual darkness, deceit and ignorance.

We can also interpret all the dwelling places of Lord Ram as being characters of those who practice Bhakti; all such instances are manifestations of Bhakti. To wit, a true Bhakta (sincere and true devotee of the Lord) is expected to have these stellar spiritual values in him, for then the Lord lives right inside him, and this person becomes an embodiment of Lord God, a living God.

Now, let us read about them:

सुनहु राम अब कहउँ निकेता । जहाँ बसहु सिय लखन समेता ॥ ३ ॥
जिन्ह के श्रवन समुद्र समाना । कथा तुम्हारि सुभग सरि नाना ॥ ४ ॥
भरहिं निरंतर होहिं न पूरे । तिन्ह के हिय तुम्ह कहूँ गृह रूरे ॥ ५ ॥

sunahu rāma aba kaha'um' nikētā. jahām' basahu siya lakhana samētā. 3.
jinha kē śravaṇa samudra samānā. kathā tumhāri subhaga sari nānā. 4.
bharahim nirantara hōhim na pūrē. tinha kē hiya tumha kahum' gr̥ha rūrē. 5.

Sage Valmiki told Lord Ram: 'Listen Ram, I shall now enumerate all those dwelling places where you can comfortably and joyously live along with Sita (your consort) and Laxman (your brother). (3)

Your abode shall be the heart of those whose ears are like the oceans which never get filled even though numerous rivers representing various versions of your divine stories keep pouring into them continuously. [To wit, those who do not tire of hearing the divine stories and glories of the Lord are true devotees of the Lord. This is also therefore one of the forms of Bhakti—having devotion and love for the Lord, because only those things that someone loves very dearly are the ones that would not make him or her fed up with.] (4-5)

लोचन चातक जिन्ह करि राखे । रहहिं दरस जलधर अभिलाषे ॥ ६ ॥
 निदरहिं सरित सिंधु सर भारी । रूप बिंदु जल होहिं सुखारी ॥ ७ ॥
 तिन्ह कें हृदय सदन सुखदायक । बसहु बंधु सिय सह रघुनायक ॥ ८ ॥

lōcana cātaka jinha kari rākhē. rahahim darasa jaladhara abhilāṣē. 6.
 nidarahim sarita sindhu sara bhārī. rūpa bindu jala hōhim sukhārī. 7.
 tinha kēm hrdaya sadana sukhadāyaka. basahu bandhu siya saha
 raghunāyaka. 8.

Your abode shall be the heart of those who constantly wish to see you (always concentrate and have their mind fixed on your thoughts) just like the Chakor bird which gazes at the rain-bearing cloud and is so mesmerized by its beauty that it has vowed to drink only the water in the form of rain drops that the cloud would directly put in its beak, and would rather die of thirst than seeking to quench its thirst elsewhere, for it scorns at other sources of water such as the ocean, the river and the lakes. [To wit, just like this bird, true devotee who practices Bhakti fixes his attention on the Lord, on his form and thoughts. He seeks solace and succour only from the Lord; the Lord is his only redeemer and lover. He is completely devoted to the Lord so much so that he would rather die than to seek anything from any other God.]

Oh Lord, you, along with your brother (Laxman) and wife Sita, should abide in the heart of such persons as described herein above, who wish to see the Lord, be near the Lord, and enjoy his company, for such an abode is a place that would be joyful for you, and where you can live very delightfully. (6-8)

दो०. जसु तुम्हार मानस बिमल हंसिनि जीहा जासु ।
 मुकताहल गुन गन चुनइ राम बसहु हियँ तासु ॥ १२८ ॥

dōhā.

jasu tumhāra mānasa bimala hansini jīhā jāsu.
 mukatāhala guna gana cuna'i rāma basahu hiyaṁ tāsū. 128.

Oh Lord Ram! You should make your abode in the heart of those whose swan-like tongue picks up your virtues which are like pearls present in the pristine pure lake known as Mansarovar¹ which symbolizes your fame. [To wit, the Lord should live in the heart and mind and thought of those who always love to speak of the Lord and praise him.]

[¹The Mansarovar Lake is lake of crystal clean water located in the upper reaches of the Himalayas. Pearls are strewn in this lake. Majestic Swans float on the surface of the water in this lake. These Swans possess a special quality that enables them to pick these pearls and eat them, leaving all other things in the water. This metaphor is used to stress that Bhakti entails paying attention to the glories of the Lord and his virtues while reading or listening to the Lord's stories, and leaving aside all other things as being of no consequence. A true practitioner of Bhakti focuses his attention on the good things in the story of the Lord and steps aside from those that

are not, for he understands that since the Lord has assumed a human form it is obligatory upon him to exhibit at least some of the failings of a human being so that he can play his part to perfection.

Remember: The Lord is perfect in everything he does, so it would be wrong on his part if he does not show some of the shortcomings of an ordinary human being once he has assumed this form. So a true Bhakta does not allow himself to be distracted by the many human aspects in the story of the Lord. His devotion, love and faith in the Lord and his divinity, i.e. his Bhakti for the Lord, are not at all affected by such inconsequential and superficial discrepancies and inconsistencies in the Lord's glories.] (Doha no. 128)

चौ०. प्रभु प्रसाद सुचि सुभग सुबासा । सादर जासु लहइ नित नासा ॥ १ ॥
तुम्हहि निबेदित भोजन करहीं । प्रभु प्रसाद पट भूषन धरहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu prasāda suci subhaga subāsā. sādara jāsū laha'i nita nāsā. 1.
tumhahi nibēdita bhōjana karahīm. prabhu prasāda paṭa bhūṣana dharahīm.
2.

Oh Lord Ram! [Now I shall list other places which are your comfortable abodes.] Live in the thoughts, the mind and the heart of those whose nose find delight in inhaling the fragrance of flowers etc. that are offered to you as a sacred offering during worship. [To wit, a true devotee worships the Lord and offers flowers to him. The fragrance of these flowers cheers up his inner self. The important point to note is that he is not charmed by the fragrance of these flowers while they were in the garden, but once they have been offered to the Lord they assume a divine value for him. So when the fragrance of such flowers reaches his nose, he feels the presence of the Lord near him. Such attitude is one of the forms of Bhakti—where anything seems lovable only when it is associated with the Lord. The flower in the garden or the basket is of no value for a devotee, but once it has been offered to the Lord it becomes a sanctified thing for him.] (1)

Abide in the thoughts, mind and heart of those who eat any kind of food only after offering it to you first, and who accept their clothes and ornaments after first offering them to you, and as a token of your divine grace upon them. [To wit, Bhakti entails that a person regards that whatever he eats or wears is a gift from the Lord unto him. they eat and wear are your sacred blessing upon them. A true devotee is one who offers everything to the Lord and accepts whatever comes his way as a gift of the Lord to him. In all sooth, this is an obvious sign of total submission and devotion for the Lord, and it is one of the many ways of practicing Bhakti for the Lord.] (2)

सीस नवहिं सुर गुरु द्विज देखी । प्रीति सहित करि बिनय बिसेषी ॥ ३ ॥
कर नित करहिं राम पद पूजा । राम भरोस हृदयँ नहिं दूजा ॥ ४ ॥

sīsa navahim̐ sura guru dvija dēkhī. prīti sahita kari binaya bisēṣī. 3.
kara nita karahim̐ rāma pada pūjā. rāma bharōsa hṛdayam̐ nahim̐ dūjā. 4.

[Oh Lord Ram—] You should reside in the thoughts, the mind and the heart of those who bow their heads cheerfully and lovingly before their elders (such as Brahmins), teachers (Guru) and Gods when they see them, treating them with great politeness and respect. [Bhakti entails showing respect to others and treating them as being representatives of the Lord. A true devotee is one who shows respect to Lord God himself, and has high esteem for others who honour to the Lord. This is an extension of the metaphysical view that the Supreme Being has manifested in all the forms that one encounters in one's daily life. So when one shows respect to one's elders and teachers and other holy souls, one is actually offering his respect to the Lord. This truly is Bhakti in practice.] (3)

Similarly oh Lord Ram, you should live in the thoughts, mind and heart of those who worship you daily with their own hands on a regular basis, and who have no faith in their heart on anyone else except you. [To wit, one should worship the Lord personally, and not by engaging priests. This is another form of Bhakti—to worship the Lord regularly and personally. Another form of Bhakti is to rely solely on the Lord and have firm faith in him. True Bhakti means having no other reliance except the Lord God.] (4)

चरन राम तीरथ चलि जाहीं । राम बसहु तिन्ह के मन माहीं ॥ ५ ॥
मंत्रराजु नित जपहिं तुम्हारा । पूजहिं तुम्हहि सहित परिवारा ॥ ६ ॥

carana rāma tīratha cali jāhīm. rāma basahu tinha kē mana māhīm. 5.
mantrarāju nita japahim̐ tumhārā. pūjahim̐ tumhahi sahita parivārā. 6.

Oh Lord Ram! Live in the thoughts, the mind and the heart (“Mana”) of those who worship your holy feet and regard them as an embodiment of all holy places (pilgrim sites) taken together so much so that by worshipping your holy feet such devotees deem themselves to have gone to all pilgrim places and completed their pilgrimage (5).

Oh Lord, live in the thoughts, mind and heart of those who regularly, consistently and constantly repeat your Holy Name (RAM) which is like a ‘king’ amongst all the Mantras (spiritual formulas), and those who worship you with all the members of their family, their kith and kin. (6)

तरपन होम करहिं बिधि नाना । बिप्र जेवाँइ देहिं बहु दाना ॥ ७ ॥
तुझ तें अधिक गुरहि जियँ जानी । सकल भायँ सेवहिं सनमानी ॥ ८ ॥

tarapana hōma karahim̐ bidhi nānā. bipra jēvām̐ dēhim̐ bahu dānā.
tumha tēm adhika gurahi jiyam̐ jānī. sakala bhāyam̐ sēvahim̐ sanamānī. 4.

Oh Lord Ram! Live in the thoughts, the mind and the heart of those who piously perform fire sacrifices by making offerings and oblations to the Gods and the sacred fire, and who feed Brahmins and make charities in various ways (according to their

abilities). [Bhakti involves making offerings and charities in the name of the Lord. Of course one should do it selflessly, and remember the Lord while engaging in this meritorious deed.] (7)

Oh Lord, live in the thoughts, the mind and the heart of those who give their Guru (moral preceptor; wise spiritual teacher) more regard than they would even to you, and serve them in all possible ways. [To wit, a Guru should be shown great respect because it is he who shows the devotee the path to God-realisation. Besides this, the Guru is like a living God for the disciple. So honouring and worshipping and serving the Guru are equivalent to doing so for the Lord himself. (8)]

दो०. सबु करि मागहिं एक फलु राम चरन रति होउ ।
तिन्हु केँ मन मंदिर बसहु सिय रघुनंदन दोउ ॥ १२९ ॥

dōhā.

sabu kari māgahim ēka phalu rāma carana rati hō'u.
tinha kēm mana mandira basahu siya raghunandana dō'u. 129.

Those who ask for only one reward or fruit for all the meritorious deeds done by them in accordance with the advice given in the scriptures, and this reward or fruit is to have devotion, affection and faith in the holy feet of Lord Ram—verily indeed oh Lord, you should reside in the thoughts, mind and heart of such righteous and pious persons. (Doha no. 129)

चौ०. काम कोह मद मान न मोहा । लोभ न छोभ न राग न द्रोहा ॥ १ ॥
जिन्हु केँ कपट दंभ नहिं माया । तिन्हु केँ हृदय बसहु रघुराया ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kāma kōha mada māna na mōhā. lōbha na chōbha na rāga na drōhā. 1.
jinha kēm kapaṭa dambha nahim māyā. tinha kēm hṛdaya basahu raghurāyā.
2.

Oh Lord Ram! Stay in the pious and purified heart of those who are free from the negativities and spiritual darkness associated with such demeaning qualities as lust and passion (kāma), anger and wrathfulness (kōha), arrogance and haughtiness (mada), pride and ego (māna), delusions that result from ignorance (na mōhā), greed and rapacity (lōbha na), grief, regrets and sorrows (chōbha na), or any sort of attraction or aversion for anything or anyone (because they have exemplary equanimity and uniformity of thought; they have no trace of infatuation, longing and attachment with anything or anyone in this world on the one hand, nor enmity, ill-will, malice and hatred on the other hand—rāga na drōhā). (1)

Similarly oh Lord, you should live in the heart of those who are free from fraud, conceit, deceit, pretensions and hypocrisy (jinhā kēm kapaṭa dambha nahīm), and delusions of all kinds (nahīm māyā).¹ (2)

[¹Obviously, persons who have these eclectic spiritual virtues would be peaceful at heart and calm in their mind. They are pious and holy by their very nature. They would have equanimity in their behaviour and thought, and would remain unruffled even during the greatest of adversities. Nothing moves them, nothing disturbs them, and all circumstances, whether favourable or unfavourable, are the same for them.

Lord Ram is asked to live in the heart of such exalted souls who are exemplarily tranquil and composed. To wit, these are the qualities of saints, and they come automatically when one practices Bhakti.

Hence, Bhakti and these grand virtues exist concurrently, or we can say that these virtues are a manifestation of Bhakti that a person practices; they are the characteristic qualities of 'Bhaktas', the 'practitioners of Bhakti'.

More such qualities are enumerated herein below.]

सब के प्रिय सब के हितकारी । दुख सुख सरिस प्रसंसा गारी ॥ ३ ॥
कहहिं सत्य प्रिय बचन बिचारी । जागत सोवत सरन तुम्हारी ॥ ४ ॥

saba kē priya saba kē hitakārī. dukha sukha sarisa prasansā gārī. 3.
kahahīm satya priya bacana bicārī. jāgata sōvata sarana tumhārī. 4.

Again, oh Lord Ram, dwell in the heart of those who are friendly and amiable towards all, who are the beloved benefactor for others, who have exemplary virtue of equanimity so much so that they remain unruffled and unmoved in opposing situations of sorrows and joys, who treat abuse and applause equally (3),---

---Who scrupulously speak the truth and always use polite words, who have surrendered themselves before you during all moments of their lives, whether they are awake or asleep. (4)

तुम्हहि छाड़ि गति दूसरी नहीं । राम बसहु तिन्ह के मन माहीं ॥ ५ ॥
जननी सम जानहिं परनारी । धनु पराव बिष तें बिष भारी ॥ ६ ॥

tumhahi chāḍi gati dūsari nāhīm. rāma basahu tinha kē mana māhīm. 5.
jananī sama jānahīm paranārī. dhanu parāva biṣa tēm biṣa bhārī. 6.

Those for whom you are the only means of solace and succour, the only hope and assurance, and the only spiritual destination and goal of their lives—verily indeed, oh Lord Ram, you must abide in their thoughts, mind and heart. (5)

Similarly oh Lord, you should live in the heart of those who treat all women folk (literally, another person's wife—"paranārī") with due respect and dignity as they would treat their own mother, and who regard the wealth of others as the deadliest of poisons (i.e. who do not covet the wealth of any person). (6)

जे हरषहिं पर संपति देखी । दुखित होहिं पर बिपति बिसेषी ॥ ७ ॥
जिन्हहि राम तुम्ह प्रानपिआरे । तिन्ह के मन सुभ सदन तुम्हारे ॥ ८ ॥

jē haraṣahim para sampati dēkhī. dukhita hōhim para bipati bisēṣī. 7.
jinhahi rāma tumha prānapi'ārē. tinha kē mana subha sadana tumhārē. 8.

Those who are glad at the prosperity and happiness of others, and feel sad and sorry at their distress, pain and agony (i.e. who feel joy when they see others happy, and sorry at the misfortune of others) (7), ---

---And who love you more than their own lives—verily indeed oh Lord, the thought, the mind and the heart of such persons are an auspicious place for you to stay in (8).

दो०. स्वामि सखा पितु मातु गुर जिन्ह के सब तुम्ह तात ।
मन मंदिर तिन्ह कें बसहु सीय सहित दोउ भ्रात ॥ १३० ॥

dōhā.

svāmi sakhā pitu mātū gura jinha kē saba tumha tāta.
mana mandira tinha kēm basahu sīya sahita dō'u bhrāta. 130.

Oh Lord Ram! Stay in the 'temple symbolized by the mind-and-heart' of those for whom you are the only Lord, friend, father, mother, teacher (svāmi sakhā pitu mātū gura) in their lives—i.e. for whom you are the only relation that matters in this world, for whom you are the dearest of kin, the most gracious benefactor, the wisest of guide, and the only sustainer and protector in this world.

[To wit, those for whom the only Lord, the only friend, the only companion, the only guide and the only kith and kin is Lord Ram, who know no one else except Lord Ram—it is in their temple-like mind and heart that Lord Ram lives.

These are the qualities of a true Bhakta and a vivid manifestation of Bhakti. Only those who have devotion, love and faith in Lord Ram—or 'Bhakti for Lord Ram'—would ever think in this way.] (Doha no. 130)

चौ०. अवगुन तजि सब के गुन गहहीं । बिप्र धेनु हित संकट सहहीं ॥ १ ॥
नीति निपुन जिन्ह कइ जग लीका । घर तुम्हार तिन्ह कर मनु नीका ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

avaguna taji saba kē guna gahahīm. bipra dhēnu hita saṅkaṭa sahaḥīm. 1.
nīti nipuna jinha ka'i jaga līkā. ghara tumhāra tinha kara manu nīkā. 2.

Oh Lord Ram! You have a good abode in the mind and heart of those who discard other's faults and pick up their goodness and virtues, who suffer for the cause of the wise ones and all humble creatures (here represented by the cows) (1), ---

---and who are well-versed in the laws of proper conduct, propriety, ethics and righteousness.¹ (2)

[¹Once again, a true devotee of Lord Ram would have these excellent qualities. So they are manifestations of Bhakti. To wit, when one has devotion for Lord Ram and loves the Lord, i.e. when one practices Bhakti and is therefore a Bhakta of the Lord, he would have the excellent characters mentioned in these and other verses.]

गुन तुम्हार समुझइ निज दोसा । जेहि सब भाँति तुम्हार भरोसा ॥ ३ ॥
राम भगत प्रिय लागहिं जेही । तेहि उर बसहु सहित बैदेही ॥ ४ ॥

guna tumhāra samujha'i nija dōsā. jēhi saba bhām̐ti tumhāra bharōsā. 3.
rāma bhagata priya lāgahīn̐ jēhī. tēhi ura basahu sahita baidēhī. 4.

Again oh Lord Ram, you and Sita (your consort) should stay in the heart (ura) of those who attribute all good done by them as being done due to your grace, and hold themselves responsible for all the faults (i.e. who do not feel proud of good deeds done by them, and instead remain humble and unpretentious), who have you as their only support and succour (3), ---

---And who love those who are your devotees (i.e. who feel a sense of kinship with those who are your Bhaktas and who practice Bhakti for you). (4)

जाति पाँति धनु धरमु बड़ाई । प्रिय परिवार सदन सुखदाई ॥ ५ ॥
सब तजि तुम्हहि रहइ उर लाई । तेहि के हृदयँ रहहु रघुराई ॥ ६ ॥

jāti pām̐ti dhanu dharamu barā'ī. priya parivāra sadana sukhadā'ī. 5.
saba taji tumhahi raha'i ura lā'ī. tēhi kē hṛdayam̐ rahahu raghurā'ī. 6.

Further, oh Lord Ram, dwell in the heart of those who abandon all worldly relationships, who renounce all sorts of associations pertaining to this world and expectations from it, such as those related to one's caste, clan, wealth, religious obligations, honour and fame, family, kith and kin, duties of the household, and desire for comfort that the gross body demands from them. (5)

Instead of allowing their minds to be occupied by the thoughts of these things and allowing these things to occupy their heart by being infatuated with them, they (i.e. your true devotees) embrace you with all sincerity, filling their mind with your thoughts and enshrining you in their heart with the greatest of reverence (like one consecrates a deity in a shrine).¹ (6)

[¹To wit, Lord Ram abides in the mind and heart of those who have severed all worldly relationships and have determined that the Lord is their only kith and kin. They have cleansed their inner-self, they have removed all clutter from their mind and heart, and then they have respectfully and lovingly welcomed Lord Ram and invited him to come and abide in this shrine. They abandon all other thoughts, and focus their

mind and attention solely on Lord Ram. Surely enough, this is one of the best ways of practicing Bhakti.

“Oh Lord, you should reside in the heart of such persons who have preferred or opted to keep you close to their heart and give you an exclusive place in it to reside by vacating all other worldly relationships and attachments from it. Therefore, they discard all desires from their hearts to make way for you. Hence, they pay no heed to whether or not they are adhering to the edicts and requirements of caste, creed and religion; they eliminate all longings for wealth and prosperity from their hearts; they remove the desire for following the principles of Dharma (laws of righteousness, propriety and probity) so as to obtain welfare and happiness in this world; they abandon the natural attachment of the heart towards one’s family, kith and kin, compatriots and friends, as well as homestead. Nothing concerns them any more once they have decided to clean the inner chambers of their heart and make place for you. They treat the rest of the world and anything related with it, including all material things and relationships, as redundant and as useless as garbage that must be thrown out to clean one’s inner self so that the one who is most dear to the person can be welcomed with open arms and given a neat and honourably place to stay in.”]

सरगु नरकु अपबरगु समाना । जहँ तहँ देख धरें धनु बाना ॥ ७ ॥
करम बचन मन राउर चेरा । राम करहु तेहि कें उर डेरा ॥ ८ ॥

saragu naraku apabaragu samānā. jaham̐ taham̐ dēkha dharēm̐ dhanu bānā.

7.

karama bacana mana rā'ura cērā. rāma karahu tēhi kēm̐ ura ḍērā. 8.

Oh Lord Ram! Make a dwelling in the heart of those for whom heaven and hell, as well as freedom from the cycle of birth and death are the same in as much as they behold you holding a bow and arrow here, there and everywhere else. [To wit, they feel your divine presence everywhere in this world. They are aware of the truth that you are the all-pervading and omnipresent Supreme Lord of the world. So it does not matter to them whether they live in heaven or in hell, whether they die or live—because they feel your presence everywhere around them, they know that you are always available to them to give your love and protection to them.] (7)

Oh Lord Ram! Live in the heart of those who are truly devoted to you, who are like your loyal and faithful servants by their action, deed, thought and speech (karama bacana mana rā'ura cērā). [To wit, Bhakti requires that whatever the devotee does, whatever he thinks, whatever he says—everything is related to the Lord God. For him, there is nothing to do, nothing to think about, and nothing to talk about except the Lord.] (8).

दो०. जाहि न चाहिअ कबहुँ कछु तुम्ह सन सहज सनेहु ।
बसहु निरंतर तासु मन सो राउर निज गेहु ॥ १३१ ॥

dōhā.

jāhi na cāhi'a kabahum̃ kachu tumha sana sahaja sanēhu.
basahu nirantara tāsū mana sō rā'ura nija gēhu. 131.

And finally oh Lord Ram, reside permanently in the thought, the mind and the heart of those who have no desire whatsoever in this world, but instead they have a natural affinity for you, their inherent love and affection for you forms an integral part of their entire being, and who love you deeply and unconditionally.

Oh Lord Ram! Such a person's holy and uncorrupt mind and heart are deemed to be your own natural dwelling place. (Doha no. 131)

(2.4) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 137:

The forest-dwelling humble people welcomed Lord Ram and served the Lord in the best way they could. The Lord was extremely pleased with their devotion and affection for him, and so it is observed that the only relationship the Lord recognizes is that of love, affection and devotion as explicitly affirmed in the following verse:

चौ०. रामहि केवल प्रेमु पिआरा । जानि लेउ जो जाननिहारा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

rāmahi kēvala prēmu pi'ārā. jāni lē'u jō jānanihārā. 1.

'Lord Ram is concerned with the level of affection that one has for the Lord, and other things are immaterial as far as the Lord is concerned; let this irrefutable fact be known to all.' (1)

(2.5) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 182:

It so happened that Lord Ram's step-mother Kaikeyi wanted to appoint her son Bharat on the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya. So she threw a tantrum and contrived a method by which she forced king Dasrath, the Lord's worldly father, to send Lord Ram to the forest for fourteen years and anoint Bharat on the throne. When Bharat eventually came to know of this evil scheme of his mother, he not only sternly rebuked her in public but also refused to accept the crown. When a full court was assembled and the royal priest, sage Vashistha, along with other senior ministers as well as Kaushalya, the queen mother and the mother of Lord Ram, tried to persuade Bharat to accept the crown, he firmly declined. During this conference he made an observation that is very important from the perspective of our theme of 'Bhakti'—i.e. true devotion, true love and true service to the Lord God.

He said as follows:

डरु न मोहि जग कहिहि कि पोचू । परलोकहु कर नाहिन सोचू ॥ ५ ॥

एकइ उर बस दुसह दवारी । मोहि लगि भे सिय रामु दुखारी ॥ ६ ॥

ḍaru na mōhi jaga kahihi ki pōcū. paralōkahu kara nāhina sōcū. 5.
ēka'i ura basa dusaha davārī. mōhi lagi bhē siya rāmu dukhārī. 6.

Bharat poignantly said: 'I am not worried or regretful that the world would call me evil, and neither am I concerned about my destiny being doomed. (5)

What does bother me actually and burns my heart in a great fire of regret and repentance is that Lord Ram and Sita has had to suffer due to me. [To wit, I have become a cause of Lord Ram going to the forest, though I had no role to play in it at all. I just can't overcome this pain that bleeds my heart and sets it on fire!] (6)

जीवन लाहु लखन भल पावा । सबु तजि राम चरन मनु लावा ॥ ७ ॥

jīvana lāhu lakhana bhala pāvā. sabu taji rāma carana manu lāvā. 7.

Verily indeed, Laxman (my younger brother) is so extremely lucky and blessed that he has got the reward of living a fruitful life here and now by abandoning everything else and focusing his attention in having an abiding love and devotion for the holy feet of the Lord in as much as that he decided to accompany him to the forest and serve him there every moment of his life. [To wit, whereas I have been the cause of suffering to the Lord, Laxman is so highly blessed and fortunate that he renounced everything and decided to serve the Lord by accompanying him to the forest and helping in whatever humble way he could.] (7)

(2.6) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 178:

During the same deliberations, Bharat had made another important observation regarding the true meaning of Bhakti—that his true welfare and good was in serving Lord Ram which his wicked mother has snatched from him. He says that he has thought over this issue deeply and come to the conclusion that his welfare and good lies nowhere else, in no other thing except in serving the Lord. He says:

चौ०. हित हमार सियपति सेवकाई । सो हरि लीन्ह मातु कुटिलाई ॥ १ ॥
मैं अनुमानि दीख मन माहीं । आन उपायँ मोर हित नाही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

hita hamāra siyapati sēvakā'īm. sō hari līnha mātu kuṭilā'īm. 1.
mair̥ anumāni dīkha mana māhīr̥. āna upāyam̐ mōra hita nāhīr̥. 2.

Bharat declared: 'My real good and true welfare lies in being able to serve Lord Ram ("siyapati"—literally, the husband of Sita), but most unfortunately this has been snatched by the wickedness of my mother. (1)

Verily indeed, I have pondered and thought over the matter in my mind and concluded that there is no other way by which my welfare and good can be had.' (2)

(2.7) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 183 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede it:

True Bhakti also means that the devotee has complete and absolute faith in his Lord God that no matter how bad, sinful, evil or fallen he might be, the Lord will always accept him and forgive him irrespective of his follies. Bharat clearly affirms this firmness of faith in the Lord's merciful and gracious nature when he declares:

जद्यपि मैं अनभल अपराधी । भै मोहि कारन सकल उपाधी ॥ ३ ॥
तदपि सरन सनमुख मोहि देखी । छमि सब करिहहि कृपा बिसेषी ॥ ४ ॥

jadyapi mair̥ anabhala aparādhī. bhai mōhi kārana sakala upādhī. 3.
tadapi sarana sanamukha mōhi dēkhī. chami saba karihahim̐ kṛpā bisēṣī. 4.

Bharat expressed his complete faith and confidence in Lord Ram that the Lord would definitely forgive him and accept him unconditionally inspite of all the bitterness of events that had unfolded by affirming in full court that had assembled to decide the next course of action, 'Although I am evil and sinful by all counts, and am definitely the accused who has been at the root cause for the nasty events and the mischief that have created in my name, albeit I had no role to play in them nor was I privy to any evil mechanisms of my evil mother [3]—but still I am absolutely certain and confident that when the Lord would see that I have come to surrender myself before him and begging for forgiveness, the all-merciful and kind Lord would not only forget everything in a moment but would also lovingly welcome and accept me by showing exemplary grace and mercy upon me [4]. (3-4)

सील सकुच सुठि सरल सुभाऊ । कृपा सनेह सदन रघुराऊ ॥ ५ ॥
अरिहुक अनभल कीन्ह न रामा । मैं सिसु सेवक जद्यपि बामा ॥ ६ ॥

sīla sakuca suṭhi sarala subhā'ū. kṛpā sanēha sadana raghurā'ū. 5.
arihuka anabhala kīnha na rāmā. mair̥ sisu sēvaka jadyapi bāmā. 6.

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, Lord Ram ("raghurā'ū"—the exalted King of the Raghu line of kings of Ayodhya) is most kind, courteous, gracious, benevolent and loving, hesitant to punish and show annoyance towards his offenders, of an extremely affable and simple nature, as well as an abode of mercy and compassion. (5)

Lord Ram has never ever harmed even his enemy. I am after all like his child though I may be mischievous and naughty by nature, being the cause of nuisance to the Lord. [To wit, just like a loving and doting father loves his only son even though the son may cause a lot of nuisance to him, let it be known that Lord Ram loves me in

the same manner. So he will cheerfully embrace me inspite of all the mischief that has been caused due to me.] (6)

दो०. जद्यपि जनमु कुमातु तें मैं सठु सदा सदोस ।
आपन जानि न त्यागिहहिं मोहि रघुबीर भरोस ॥ १८३ ॥

dōhā.

jadyapi janamu kumātu tēm mair̥m saṭhu sadā sadōsa.
āpana jāni na tyāgihahim̥ mōhi raghubīra bharōsa. 183.

Though unfortunately I was born of a wicked mother, and I have unwittingly become sinful and tainted myself, but I have absolute confidence and full faith in my Lord Ram (“raghubīra”—the great warrior of the Raghu line of kings) that when he finds that I have come to him as one of his own, he will definitely accept me, and never forsake me.¹ (Doha no. 183)

[¹In these verses Bharat essentially says that though it is correct that he (Bharat) is the root cause of all the mischief that has occurred in Ayodhya which led to Lord Ram’s forest exile and the death of his father Dasrath, it is certain that when Lord Ram sees him (Bharat) in front, seeking forgiveness and refuge in the Lord’s holy feet, he (the Lord) would surely forgive him (Bharat) and lovingly accept him, because the Lord is an ocean of mercy and compassion.]

(2.8) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 204:

Bharat decided to go to the forest and bring Lord Ram back. On his way he visited Prayag, the holy pilgrim place where the three holy rivers, Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati meet each other. Here, he prayed to the deity of the place, seeking only one boon—which was to have unstinted love and devotion for Lord Ram and his holy feet. This desire is a manifestation of the virtue of ‘Bhakti’:

दो०. अरथ न धरम न काम रुचि गति न चहउँ निरबान ।
जनम जनम रति राम पद यह बरदानु न आन ॥ २०४ ॥

dōhā.

aratha na dharama na kāma ruci gati na caha'um̃ nirabāna.
janama janama rati rāma pada yaha baradānu na āna. 204.

Bharat prayed to the deity of the holy place called Prayag, seeking this boon: ‘I am not interested in Artha (material wealth and prosperity), Dharma (following the scriptural sanctioned path of righteousness and probity), Kaam (fulfillment of worldly desires) or Nirvana (Mokhsha—emancipation and salvation of the soul). The only boon and reward I want is that I may have unwavering, undiluted and unstinted love

and devotion for holy feet of Lord Ram for all generations to come, for all times to come, and in all my future births.’ (Doha no. 204)

(2.9) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 265:

Lord Ram is under the sway of his devotee (the Bhakta), the Lord is under the spell or influence of his devotees by the virtue of devotion that they have, and so the Lord willingly does what the devotee wishes. This fact highlights the great spiritual value of Bhakti—the grand virtues of having devotion, love and faith in the Lord God:

बहुरि बिचारि परस्पर कहहीं । रघुपति भगत भगति बस अहहीं ॥ ३ ॥

bahuri bicāri paraspara kahahīm. raghupati bhagata bhagati basa ahahīm. 3.

The Gods discussed the advice given to them by their Guru, and after deliberations they decided that Raghupati (Lord Ram, the king of the Raghu dynasty) is overwhelmed by the devotion of his devotees, and the Lord finds himself obliged to such devotees so much that he obeys them and fulfills their wishes. (3)

(2.10) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 204, and Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 205:

Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, visited Prayag, the holy pilgrim place situated at the confluence of the three holy rivers Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati, and sought the presiding deity’s blessings that the only boon he asks for is to have unflinching and true devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram. Verily, this is the way a true Bhakta of the Lord should think; it is a true sign of having Bhakti in one’s heart.

दो०. अरथ न धरम न काम रुचि गति न चहउँ निरबान ।

जनम जनम रति राम पद यह बरदानु न आन ॥ २०४ ॥

dōhā.

aratha na dharama na kāma ruci gati na caha'um^ṇ nirabāna.
janama janama rati rāma pada yaha baradānu na āna. 204.

Bharat prayed to the presiding deity of Prayag, the pilgrim place situated at the confluence of holy rivers Ganges, Yamuna and Sarawati, ‘I have no desire for wealth and prosperity, nor of the merit got by doing auspicious deeds and observing the principles of righteousness, nor fulfillment of any passions and acquiring worldly pleasures, and neither am I interested in attaining liberation and deliverance or eternal bliss for my soul.

The only blessing that I want is to have devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram for all generations to come, and in all my forms in which I am born

again and again in accordance to the cycle of birth and death till I attain natural emancipation and salvation for myself¹. (Doha no. 204)

[¹A true Bhakta or devotee of the Lord does not want anything but love for the Lord and being able to serve the Lord's holy feet. Spiritual liberation and deliverance, emancipation, salvation and eternal bliss for the soul comes automatically to him.]

चौ०. जानहुँ रामु कुटिल करि मोही । लोग कहउ गुर साहिब द्रोही ॥ १ ॥
सीता राम चरन रति मोरें । अनुदिन बढ़उ अनुग्रह तोरें ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jānahum̐ rāmu kuṭila kari mōhī. lōga kaha'u gura sāhiba drōhī. 1.
sītā rāma carana rati mōrēm̐. anudina baṛha'u anugraha tōrēm̐. 2.

It may be that Lord Ram would treat me like I was a wicked person, or let the world call me an enemy of my Guru (teacher) or my Lord (Ram), (1) ---

--- But let it be clear that I am not concerned with anything. Let it be so that my love and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram and Sita is enhanced day by day.¹
(2)

[¹A true devotee is not bothered about what the world says about him. His only concern is to ensure that his love and devotion for the Lord is not diminished even by a fraction. Nay, he wishes that his love and devotion for the Lord goes on increasing every moment of his life.]

जलदु जनम भरि सुरति बिसारउ । जाचत जलु पबि पाहन डारउ ॥ ३ ॥
चातकु रटनि घटें घटि जाई । बढें प्रेमु सब भाँति भलाई ॥ ४ ॥

jaladu janama bhari surati bisāra'u. jācata jalu pabi pāhana ḍāra'u. 3.
cātaku raṭani ghaṭēm̐ ghaṭi jāī. baṛhēm̐ prēmu saba bhām̐ti bhalāī. 4.

[Citing the example of the bird known as Chatak (the sparrow hawk), Bharat says—]
The cloud may neglect the Chatak for life and hit him hard with hail and lightning when the bird pleads for rain drops to quench its thirst, but the reputation of the Chatak would suffer and it would fall in the eyes of others if it turns away from the cloud and seeks water from any other source.¹ (3-4)

[¹This legendary bird is said to love the cloud so much that it has taken a vow that it would drink only rain drops to quench its thirst, and would prefer to die otherwise. Likewise, a true Bhakta would want no other boon or reward except to have love and devotion for the Lord God.]

Bharat says: “Let my devotion and love for the holy feet of Lord Ram and Sita (the Lord's divine consort) increase day by day as a result of your (sage Bharadwaj's) blessings. Even if the cloud forgets about the Chatak for the entire duration of the latter's life and does not give the drop of rain this poor bird so earnestly requests the

cloud for to quench its thirst, and may it be so that the cloud become so cruel and hostile that when the Chatak asks for a drop of rain the clouds angrily showers it with hail-stones and hits it with the thunderbolt (Vajra), the humble Chatak still longs for the single drop of rain that it expects the cloud to give it. The Chatak never thinks of breaking its vows of accepting no other drop of water except the one which is directly provided by the cloud, because if it does so its immaculate reputation as a lover of the cloud and a steadfast upholder of vows would suffer, and the Chatak does not want this ignominy to taint its wonderful reputation as a devoted lover of the cloud. Just like gold becoming purer when it is heated in the fire, the glory of a servant (devotee) of the Lord shines and acquires fame when he is able to maintain his love, devotion and submission for the Lord under all situations and eventualities.”]

कनकहिं बान चढ़इ जिमि दाहें । तिमि प्रियतम पद नेम निबाहें ॥ ५ ॥

kanakahim bāna caṛha'i jimi dāhēm. timi priyatama pada nēma nibāhēm. 5.

Even as gold acquires a radiant glow when it is heated in fire, a true lover's glory and fame are heightened if he is totally devoted to and surrendered in love for his lover.¹ (5)

[¹A true devotee of the Lord God has to pass through many tests in life where his faith and love for the Lord are tested. He is advised in these verses to remain steadfast in his conviction and endure whatever adversities come his way, as these tests would only bring out the spiritual shine him to the fore.]

(2.11) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 290—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 291:

At Chitrakoot, the place in the forest where Lord Ram lived during his forest sojourn, the Lord was faced with a dilemma as Bharat insisted that he should return to the capital of Ayodhya. So Lord Ram approached sage Vashistha, the royal priest of the kingdom, to seek his advice and intervention. At that time, Vashistha highlighted the importance of having devotion for the Lord in the following words:

तुम्ह बिनु राम सकल सुख साजा । नरक सरिस दुहु राज समाजा ॥ ८ ॥

asa kahi ati sakucē raghurā'ū. muni pulakē lakhi sīlu subhā'ū.
tumha binu rāma sakala sukha sājā. naraka sarisa duhu rāja samājā. 8.

Sage Vashistha told Lord Ram: ‘Without you, all the comforts and pleasures of the home and the world are like hell for all the subjects (people; citizens).’¹ (8)

[¹To wit, a devotee would want nothing else but closeness with the Lord so that he can serve the Lord he loves dearly from his heart. Material comforts and pleasures of the gross world do not attract him in the least.]

दो०. प्रान प्रान के जीव के जिव सुख के सुख राम ।

तुम्ह तजि तात सोहात गृह जिन्हहि तिन्हहि बिधि बाम ॥ २९० ॥

dōhā.

prāna prāna kē jīva kē jiva sukha kē sukha rāma.

tumha taji tāta sōhāta gr̥ha jinhahi tinhahi bidhi bāma. 290.

Oh Lord Ram! You are at the core of life itself; you are the very essence of one's soul; and you are the joy of all sorts of joys. [To wit, there is no life without you; there is no soul without you; and there is no joy and happiness without you.]

If anyone abandons you or turns away from you to find happiness and joy in a home, then surely and without gainsay the Creator is opposed to such a person. [To wit, a person is most unfortunate and stupid if he turns away from Lord God and finds attraction in the affairs of the gross mundane world. Such a person dooms his own destiny. Since the Creator is the one who had written about the person's destiny, it is said here that the Creator is unfavourable towards this person as he has motivated this person to turn away from the Lord God.] (Doha no. 290)

चौ०. सो सुखु करमु धरमु जरि जाऊ । जहँ न राम पद पंकज भाऊ ॥ १ ॥

जोगु कुजोगु ग्यानु अग्यानु । जहँ नहिं राम पेम परधानू ॥ २ ॥

तुम्ह बिनु दुखी सुखी तुम्ह तेहीं । तुम्ह जानहु जिय जो जेहि केहीं ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sō sukhu karamu dharamu jari jā'ū. jaham' na rāma pada paṅkaja bhā'ū. 1.

jōgu kujōgu gyānu agyānū. jaham' nahim rāma pēma paradhānū. 2.

tumha binu dukhī sukhī tumha tēhīm. tumha jānahu jiya jō jēhi kēhīm. 3.

Where there is no love and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram, let all other blessings of the world such as happiness and joy, as well as merit accrued by such things as doing auspicious deeds and upholding the principles of righteousness, probity and propriety be burnt and reduced to ash. [To wit, if one does not have love and devotion for the Lord God, then all other joys, merits and blessings of the world become null and void for him; they are useless and without any value for him.] (1)

If love for Lord Ram is not the central theme of Yoga and Gyan, if this is not their aim and objective in one's life, then such Yoga and Gyan are worthless. [To wit, that 'Yoga' (meditation and contemplation that helps a person to establish oneness with the Lord God; the spiritual practice that brings about the union of the individual's soul with the supreme Soul of creation) in which attainment of Lord Ram is not the aim or which does not have the Lord as its focal point, and that 'Gyan' (gnosis; knowledge of the Truth; spiritual wisdom) that does not focus on Lord Ram and leads to God-realisation—both of them are fruitless and useless.] (2)

Without you everyone is unhappy; and whosoever is happy is because he has you with him. [To wit, the only way for one having happiness and bliss in life is to be near to you and hold you dear to one's heart. This is the key to happiness in life.]¹ (3)

[¹Sage Vashistha told Lord Ram: “That comfort and happiness, that deed and ritual, and that Dharma (duty and religious observance) in which there is no devotion for Lord Ram and which does not arouse love and submission for Lord Ram's lotus like feet—let all them be burnt down. Any union should be regarded as sorrowful and bad, any knowledge should be deemed to be as useless as ignorance—if they do have love for Lord Ram as the main component. If anyone is happy it is because of you, or because of your company, or because you reside in his heart, or because you are pleased with him, and if anyone is unhappy it is because of the opposite circumstances than these.

Let all Sukha (happiness and comfort), Karma and Dharma (deeds and laws of conduct) burn down where there is no love for the holy feet of Lord Ram. All righteous efforts become unrighteous, all good fortunes and luck turn to be misfortunes and ill-luck, and all types of knowledge and wisdom become as worthless as false and misleading knowledge—when there is no love for Lord Ram, or where love and devotion for the Lord does not dominate such efforts, such knowledge and such fortunes.”]

(2.12) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 299:

If a true Bhakta, a devotee of the Lord God, confesses his sins and comes to the Lord to surrender and ask for forgiveness, the Lord is so merciful, compassionate and forgiving that he immediately accepts him unconditionally. In these verses, Bharat reiterates this virtue of Lord Ram as follows:

चौ०. राउरि रीति सुबानि बड़ाई । जगत बिदित निगमागम गाई ॥ १ ॥
 क्रूर कुटिल खल कुमति कलंकी । नीच निसील निरीस निसंकी ॥ २ ॥
 तेउ सुनि सरन सामुहें आए । सकृत प्रनामु किहें अपनाए ॥ ३ ॥
 देखि दोष कबहुँ न उर आने । सुनि गुन साधु समाज बखाने ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

rā'uri rīti subāni barā'ī. jagata bidita nigamāgama gā'ī. 1.
 kūra kuṭila khala kumati kalaṅkī. nīca nisīla nirīsa nisaṅkī. 2.
 tē'u suni sarana sāmuhēm ā'ē. sakṛta pranāmu kihēm apanā'ē. 3.
 dēkhi dōṣa kabahum'na ura ānē. suni guna sādhu samāja bakhānē. 4.

Bharat told Lord Ram: ‘Oh Lord! Your noble principles, your noble attitude and greatness are well established in this world, and they have been extolled by the Vedas (ancient scriptures). (1)

Even those who are evil and vile by all means, such as those who are cruel, wicked, pervert, wild, unscrupulous, of an evil mind, immoral and censured by the

world, impudent, lacking good characters, non-believers, and reckless to the extent that they don't fear for their own doomed destiny (2)—if such wild and wicked persons come to you to surrender and seek refuge, and if they bow before you (asking for mercy and forgiveness), then surely and certainly you forgive them and accept them cheerfully and unconditionally¹ (3).

[¹This same idea is expressed by Lord Ram while welcoming Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 48.]

In spite of seeing (knowing; being aware of) the faults of such people who have come to surrender before you and seek refuge with you, you have never paid attention to their follies and shortcomings². (4)

[²To wit, the Lord is so graceful that he just neglects the faults of his devotees if they come to seek mercy and forgiveness from him. The Lord knows that no person is immune to faults, and what is important is to realize one's faults and repent for them. Even the most horrible of sinners and culprits are forgiven by the Lord when they come and submit themselves with humility and devotion before the Lord.]

(2.13) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 301:

A true Bhakta, i.e. a true devotee of the Lord God, wants only one thing—and it is to have love and devotion for the Lord and be able to serve him selflessly. His other wish is to obey the Lord's commandments:

चौ०. प्रभु पद पदुम पराग दोहाई । सत्य सुकृत सुख सीवँ सुहाई ॥ १ ॥
 सो करि कहउँ हिए अपने की । रुचि जागत सोवत सपने की ॥ २ ॥
 सहज सनेहँ स्वामि सेवकाई । स्वारथ छल फल चारि बिहाई ॥ ३ ॥
 अग्या सम न सुसाहिब सेवा । सो प्रसादु जन पावै देवा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu pada paduma parāga dōhāī. satya sukṛta sukha sīvaṁ suhāī. 1.
 sō kari kaha'um'hi'ē apanē kī. ruci jāgata sōvata sapanē kī. 2.
 sahaja sanēham' svāmi sēvakāī. svāratha chala phala cāri bihāī. 3.
 agyā sama na susāhiba sēvā. sō prasādu jana pāvai dēvā. 4.

Bharat declared his commitment to the Lord when he affirmed 'I swear by invoking the holiness of the dust of the lotus-like feet of Lord Ram, the dust that epitomizes the glorious virtues of 'spiritual truth', 'spiritual merit' and 'spiritual happiness and bliss' (1), and declare the desire of my heart that I have day and night, whether I am awake or asleep or dreaming (2)—and it is to serve the Lord selflessly, lovingly and affectionately after abandoning all deceit and pretension, and not expecting any of the four rewards¹ that accrue to a person for meritorious deeds. [To wit, Bharat says that he has only one aim—to have natural love and devotion for the Lord and be able to serve him without any selfish interest or goal, without expecting anything in return,

such as the legendary fruits or rewards (in the form of Artha, Dharma, Kaam and Moksha) that would automatically accrue due to such service.] (3)

Further, there is no better way to serve the Lord than to obey his commands. Oh Lord, now let me have this command from you (i.e. tell me what you want me to do, for your wish is my wish!) (4)

[¹The four legendary rewards for all meritorious deeds done by a person in this world are the following: 'Artha'—wealth and prosperity; 'Kaam'—fulfilment of desires; 'Dharma'—fame for goodness; and 'Moksha'—liberation and deliverance of the soul.]

(2.14) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 218 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 219:

Bhakti has such a profound importance that Lord Ram loves those who practice it so much that if someone does anything that is directly offending for the Lord, the Lord would gladly excuse the offender. But if the same offence is cause against the Lord's devotee who practices Bhakti—i.e. a person who has devotion and love for the Lord, who has surrendered himself before the Lord and adores him, who has taken refuge with the Lord and relies upon him for solace and succour—then the Lord would never accept it and is sure to punish the offender who has caused harm or pain to the devotee.

These verses highlight that if the devotee of the Lord is so submissive and dedicated to the Lord that he desires nothing but to serve and love the Lord selflessly, and obey the Lord's orders unconditionally, then the Lord too reciprocates this emotion and goes out of his way to protect and love his devotee.

In these verses, this fact has been reiterated by the Guru (moral teacher) of the Gods when he told Indra, the king of Gods, not to disturb Bharat when the latter was trying to persuade Lord Ram to come back with him to Ayodhya. The God's Guru (Brihaspati) advised Indra as follows:

चौ०. बचन सुनत सुरगुरु मुसुकाने । सहसनयन बिनु लोचन जाने ॥ १ ॥
मायापति सेवक सन माया । करइ त उलटि परइ सुरराया ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bacana sunata suraguru musukānē. sahasanayana binu lōcana jānē. 1.
māyāpati sēvaka sana māyā. kara'i ta ulaṭi para'i surarāyā. 2.

The Guru of the Gods smiled when he heard the selfish words of the Gods who were discussing amongst themselves about ways to prevent Bharat from succeeding in persuading Lord Ram to come back with him to the kingdom¹. The Guru decided that the King of Gods was blind though he had a thousand eyes (because he is not able to see the truth and realize the gravity of the situation). (1)

[¹To wit, the Gods feared that if Lord Ram takes pity on Bharat and decides to return, then the whole purpose of the Lord's descending upon earth to kill the cruel demons would be made null and void. So they began scheming against Bharat. Their

Guru smiled at their childish behaviour and warned them not to play dirty tricks upon the Lord's devotee.]

So the Guru advised the King of Gods (Indra) thus: 'Listen oh King of Gods! If you try your dirty tricks against a devotee of the Lord who himself is the Lord of Maya, the 'Lord who creates delusions and is a Grand Master of tricks', all your plans would come unstuck and undesirable things that you don't want to happen would result. [So beware and keep quiet.] (2)

तब किछु कीन्ह राम रुख जानी । अब कुचालि करि होइहि हानी ॥ ३ ॥
 सुनु सुरेस रघुनाथ सुभाऊ । निज अपराध रिसाहिं न काऊ ॥ ४ ॥
 जो अपराधु भगत कर करई । राम रोष पावक सो जरई ॥ ५ ॥

taba kichu kīnha rāma rukha jānī. aba kucālī kari hō'ihī hānī. 3.
 sunu surēsa raghunātha subhā'ū. nija aparādha risāhīm na kā'ū. 4.
 jō aparādhu bhagata kara kara'ī. rāma rōṣa pāvaka sō jara'ī. 5.

You had done what you did earlier (when circumstances had to be created so Lord Ram could go to the forest to eliminate the cruel demons and free the earth of their horrors) because it was the wish of Lord Ram that it should be so done¹. But mind you, if you play mischief now (when Bharat, the Lord's faithful brother and devotee) has come to plead personally before the Lord, you will be committing the gravest of errors of your life. So don't do it! (3)

[¹Earlier, the Gods had conspired to instigate Kaikeyi so that the events could be turned in such a way that Lord Ram could go to the forest and kill the demons and bless all those whom he met en-route. This act of the Gods was acceptable then as it was also the wish of the Lord. But now the circumstances were different—now one of Lord Ram's ardent devotee and faithful follower, i.e. his brother Bharat, was trying to plead directly to the Lord to come back to Ayodhya. So if the Gods threw a spanner in this wheel and created mischief, it would be unpardonable and would invite the Lord's punishment. This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 9—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 10; and Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 12.]

The Guru of the Gods told Indra, the king of Gods: 'Oh King of Gods! Listen to the nature of Lord Ram. The Lord never gets angry at anyone if the latter causes any offence to the Lord personally. (4)

But if any offence is caused to the devotee of the Lord, then the offender is reduced to ashes (i.e. punished severely) by the wrath of the Lord². (5)

[²The devotee of Lord Ram is dear to the Lord like his own life or breath ('Pran'); the Lord is pleased by serving his devotees, and if anyone treats them as his enemy then the Lord also treats such a person as his enemy, i.e. a person who harms the Lord's devotees, incurs the Lord's wrath. Anyone who attempts to offend Lord Ram's devotees is sure to get scorched (punished) by the fierce arrow representing the Lord's anger.]

दो०. मनहुँ न आनिअ अमरपति रघुबर भगत अकाजु ।
अजसु लोक परलोक दुख दिन दिन सोक समाजु ॥ २१८ ॥

dōhā.

manahum' na āni'a amarapati raghubara bhagata akāju.
ajasu lōka paralōka dukha dina dina sōka samāju. 218.

Oh the immortal King of Gods! Never ever harbour any thought in your mind about disturbing the work of a devotee of Lord Ram and causing annoyance to him. For god forbid, if you erroneously happen to undertake any such misadventure then you would not only invite great infamy, ridicule and scorn in this world but would also get sorrow and grief in the next world, besides experiencing woes and torments in your day-to-day life. [To wit, even the thought of coming in the way of a devotee of Lord Ram would be the single cause of all your miseries. So please be well advised to steer clear of such misadventure.] (Doha no. 218)

चौ०. सुनु सुरेस उपदेसु हमारा । रामहि सेवकु परम पिआरा ॥ १ ॥
मानत सुखु सेवक सेवकाई । सेवक बैर बैरु अधिकाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunu surēsa upadēsu hamārā. rāmahi sēvaku parama pi'ārā. 1.
mānata sukhu sēvaka sēvakā'īm. sēvaka baira bairu adhikā'īm. 2.

Listen oh King of Gods; listen to my advice. Lord Ram loves his devotee and follower most dearly. (1)

The Lord feels happy if his devotee feels happy; and on the other hand if someone creates enmity with the Lord's devotee then the Lord develops a greater enmity with the devotee's enemy. [To wit, nothing pleases the Lord than when his dear devotee is happy. So it is always advisable to serve the devotee and keep him in good humour. In the same vein, if someone develops enmity with a devotee of the Lord, then it is sure that the Lord becomes his greatest enemy. The Lord will bless those who are kind to his devotees, and punish those who offend the devotee.] (2)

जद्यपि सम नहिं राग न रोषू । गहहिं न पाप पूनु गुन दोषू ॥ ३ ॥
करम प्रधान बिस्व करि राखा । जो जस करइ सो तस फलु चाखा ॥ ४ ॥

jadyapi sama nahim rāga na rōṣū. gahahim na pāpa pūnu guna dōṣū. 3.
karama pradhāna bisva kari rākhā. jō jasa kara'i sō tasa phalu cākhā. 4.

Though it is certainly true that Lord Ram has exemplary equanimity and treats all alike, as he has no attachment with anyone nor detests anyone, and neither is the Lord affected by the sins of others nor is he moved by their goodness as he maintains neutrality and dispassion for all in this world, (3) ---

---For it is indeed true that this mortal world is governed by the Law of Karma which stipulates that a person tastes the fruit of his actions and gets a reward in accordance to his deeds¹, (4) ---

[¹To wit, though it is true that the Lord has ordained that the world would be driven by the principles of action and reaction, or the principle of Karma which says that a man reaps what he sows, but still the Lord treats each individual according to the level of devotion, humility and submission he has for the Lord. That is, the Lord would forgive and consider sympathetically the case of those who are devoted to him, ask for forgiveness, offer all their deeds and their fruits to the Lord, and submit before him unconditionally, as compared to those who are sinful and opposed to the Supreme Being. In other words, everything depends upon the individual and his own spiritual inclinations.]

तदपि करहिं सम बिषम बिहारा । भगत अभगत हृदय अनुसार ॥ ५ ॥

अगुन अलेप अमान एकरस । रामु सगुन भए भगत पेम बस ॥ ६ ॥

tadapi karahim sama biṣama bihārā. bhagata abhagata hr̥daya anusārā. 5.
aguna alēpa amāna ēkarasa. rāmu saguna bha'e bhagata pēma basa. 6.

--- Still the Lord treats a person in consonance with the feelings of the person's heart, for the Lord decides his attitude and response towards a person depending upon whether that person is pious with a purity of heart that comes naturally to a devotee of the Lord, or if he is deceitful and sinful inside¹. (5)

Indeed it is true that though the Lord is without any attributes, unattached, neutral, without any preferences and bias, formless and invisible in his primary cosmic form as the Supreme Being, yet it is undeniable that he has assumed or revealed himself in a visible form of a human being for the sake of his devotees². (6)

[¹To wit, though the Lord practices equality, equanimity and dispassion in this world, yet he is very prudent while dealing with creatures of different characters and virtues. If the concerned person is a true devotee of the Lord, if he practices Bhakti in the true sense, then he must have a pure heart that is free from worldly taints and spiritual impurities. The Lord would obviously love such a person. On the opposite side of the scale, if the person is dirty in his heart there is no chance the Lord would love him like the person who has a clean and pious heart.

Though it is true that the Lord has ordained that the world would be driven by the principles of action and reaction, or the principle of Karma which says that a man reaps what he sows, but still the Lord treats each individual according to the level of devotion, humility and submission he has for the Lord. That is, the Lord would forgive and consider sympathetically the case of those who are devoted to him, who ask the Lord for forgiveness, offer all their deeds and their resultant fruits to the Lord, and submit themselves before the Lord unconditionally.

²The Supreme Being became a human being not because he wished to enjoy the pleasures and comforts of a physical world of material objects, but because he wished to please his Bhaktas, i.e. his ardent devotees, who wished to see the Lord amongst themselves so that they could have a close interaction with the Lord they loved. Surely there was no other reason except his love for his devotees and his desire to

keep their wishes that the formless and sublime Lord assumed a physical form that is visible and gross like any other human being.]

राम सदा सेवक रुचि राखी । बेद पुरान साधु सुर साखी ॥ ७ ॥

rāma sadā sēvaka ruci rākhī. bēda purāna sādhu sura sākhi. 7.

Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, Lord Ram always keeps the wishes of his servants (i.e. devotees and followers); the Lord invariably ensures that whatever they wish is always fulfilled. This fact has been endorsed by the Vedas, the Purans and saints, and their bear witness to it. (7)

(2.15) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 324:

दो०. राम पेम भाजन भरतु बड़े न एहिं करतूति ।
चातक हंस सराहिअत टेंक बिबेक बिभूति ॥ ३२४ ॥

dōhā.

rāma pēma bhājana bharatu barē na ēhiṁ karatūti.
cātaka hansa sarāhi'ata tēṅka bibēka bibhūti. 324.

It is said that the: “The blessed ones are those who are exclusively devoted to Lord Ram and renounce all attractions for material wealth and its splendorous charm as if it was vomit.”

(3) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand:

(3.1) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-15 that precede Doha no. 10:

निर्भर प्रेम मगन मुनि ग्यानी । कहि न जाइ सो दसा भवानी ॥ १० ॥
दिसि अरु बिदिसि पंथ नहिं सूझा । को मैं चलेऊँ कहाँ नहिं बूझा ॥ ११ ॥
कबहुँक फिरि पाछें पुनि जाई । कबहुँक नृत्य करइ गुन गाई ॥ १२ ॥
अबिरल प्रेम भगति मुनि पाई । प्रभु देखैं तरु ओट लुकाई ॥ १३ ॥
अतिसय प्रीति देखि रघुबीरा । प्रगटे हृदयँ हरन भव भीरा ॥ १४ ॥
मुनि मग माझ अचल होइ बैसा । पुलक सरीर पनस फल जैसा ॥ १५ ॥

nirbhara prēma magana muni gyānī. kahi na jā'i sō dasā bhavānī. 10.
 disi aru bidisi pantha nahim sūjhā. kō maim calē'um' kahām' nahim būjhā. 11.
 kabahum'ka phiri pāchēm puni jā'ī. kabahum'ka nṛtya kara'i guna gā'ī. 12.
 abirala prēma bhagati muni pā'ī. prabhu dēkhaim taru ōṭa lukā'ī. 13.
 atisaya prīti dēkhi raghubīrā. pragaṭē hṛdayam' harana bhava bhīrā. 14.
 muni maga mājha acala hō'i baisā. pulaka sarīra panasa phala jaisā. 15.

In these verses, the emotional condition of sage Sutikshan has been described when he was overwhelmed by a surge of love and devotion for Lord Ram—"When the sage learnt that Lord Ram was coming towards where he lived, he became extremely ecstatic so much so that he lost awareness of his own self; he forgot who he was, where he was. He could not perceive any of the directions; he could not see the path before him, for everything became blurred for him. He ran forward once and backward again on the same track; he could not understand where he was going, or where he stood, for he had lost his bearing. He sometimes danced with joy, and at other times he sang wildly, singing merrily about the glories of the Lord. Then finally, at the climax of ecstasy, he became motionless; he sat down in the middle of the path with his body thrilled to the extent that it was full bristling hairs and goosebumps that resembled the skin of the jack fruit."

(3.2) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 16 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-12 that precede it:

Lord Ram dwelt on the banks of river Godavari for some time during his forest sojourn. Once his brother Laxman asked the Lord about the glorious virtue of Bhakti by which the Lord becomes graceful towards those who have this virtue in them. The Lord emphasized that though other spiritual means such as Yoga (meditation), Dharma (auspiciousness and righteous conduct) and Gyan (true knowledge of the Atma, the pure conscious soul; gnosis) are potentially effective tools to help that help the spiritual aspirant reach his goal, yet Bhakti stands tall amongst all means, and it is Bhakti that is very dear to the Lord so much so that the Lord would like to give a preferential treatment to a person who practices Bhakti. Then Lord Ram explained 'Bhakti' in the following way:

चौ०. धर्म तें बिरति जोग तें ग्याना । ग्यान मोच्छप्रद बेद बखाना ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

dharma tēm birati jōga tēm gyānā. gyāna mōcchaprada bēda bakhānā. 1.

With 'Dharma' comes 'Vairagya', and with 'Yoga' comes 'Gyan'. Gyan paves the way for 'Moksha'. [That is, all these must act in coordination for the spiritual well-being of the Jiva.] (1)

[Note—There is a very interesting deduction that we can arrive at by a close study of this Chaupai. As we have read above, the word 'Yoga' means to establish a union between two

entities. The two pair of entities here are 'Dharma' and 'Vairagya' on the one hand, and 'Gyan' and 'Moksha' on the other hand. Yoga therefore helps the Jiva to establish coordination between all of them. That is, a practitioner of Yoga is able to reap the combined benefits of Dharma, Vairagya, Gyan and Moksha simultaneously. He gets acclaim and honour for his righteous deeds and noble thoughts, he enjoys the world without getting obsessed with it and affected by its countless miseries and horrors, he is regarded as a wise and enlightened person whose advice is sought by others, no amount of delusions and darkness of ignorance would now be able to put out the light of knowledge that has begun to shine from deep inside his inner-self, and no fetter will be strong enough to shackle him (i.e. his Atma) any longer.

Following the path of Dharma and Vairagya cleanses inner-self and scrubs off all the taints, impurities and blemishes that have formed a thick crust of negativity around his Atma, the true self of the Jiva. His path towards Moksha is lighted by Gyan, and this light shows the Jiva all the spiritual pitfalls in which he might have fallen had he walked on the same path leading to Moksha in the darkness of ignorance (called A-gyan). Even as success in any endeavour is dependent upon a coordination of many favourable factors playing in harmony with each other, success in this spiritual endeavour is aided and spurred on by Yoga. This indeed is the real and practical benefit of 'Yoga'.]

The word *Dharma* literally means obeying the general rules of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety, morality and ethics. Any action or deed that is done or undertaken with these eclectic virtues in mind would come under the overall definition of Dharma. The term 'Vairagya' means renunciation, dispassion, detachment and non-involvement with the material world and its deluding charms.

A Jiva (the living being) has been indulgent, involved and associated with the world and its material sense objects from time immemorial. The world and its material things are gross by their inherent nature and dominated by the Tama Guna. Constant association with them leaves an imprint on the Atma or the pure self of the Jiva, and the latter is encrusted in a thick layer of delusions, negativity, faults, shortcomings etc. leading to countless sorrows, pain, miseries and torments. The Jiva gets sucked in the vortex represented by worldly fetters that keep him shackled for eternity. He continues to remain engrossed in the world and its material things in the false hope or expectation that they will give him peace, happiness and joy. On the contrary, they heap him with miseries and torments, pulling him down into a dark well from which the Jiva finds difficult to extricate himself as referred to in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 15. This has been explained earlier.

The Jiva had been perpetrating all sorts of mischief and nuisance, indulging in falsehood, deceit, conceit, pretensions and tricks in order to satisfy his natural urges for gratifying his 'lower self', i.e. his body and its organs, not paying heed to the requirements of his 'higher self', i.e. the needs of his Atma. All such activities of the Jiva come under the overall classification of things that are 'A-Dharma' or the opposite of what consists of Dharma. But ironically he discovers that all his efforts to find peace and happiness by following the easier path of 'A-Dharma' have failed to yield the desired result. Then if he is wise and intelligent, he will sincerely look around to find how his real objective can be achieved.

It is upon diligent enquiry that he discovers the concept of 'Dharma' by the study of the scriptures and company of wise and saintly people. The Jiva then takes a resolve to follow the principles of Dharma if they give him eternal bliss and happiness, and help him to break free from the endless cycle of miseries and torments associated with birth and death.

The path of Dharma initially appears to be difficult for him because he has to exercise exemplary self-restraint and make great efforts to rein-in his spoilt habits. But gradually he finds that each act of Dharma gives him internal peace that is more profound and deep than the artificial peace got by worldly success in obtaining the desired things or attaining transient and impermanent successes in the temporal world that itself is inconsistent. The profound internal satisfaction, gratitude, peace and happiness that one experiences by following the path of Dharma vis-à-vis the path of A-Dharma inspires and motivates the Jiva to devote full time to the former path.

Dharma has a sublime dimension to all its activities; it is marked by dominance of Sata Guna, and even the Raja Guna that is present is of a higher category. The Jiva realises that the world is selfish and it can never give him his freedom because the world needs a 'slave free of charge to satisfy its needs'. The world keeps him shackled by throwing some bits and pieces of tempting things to keep him engaged, extracting the most out of him, and then chucking him off like deadwood. The Jiva discovers that the world and its material things will never give him happiness, peace and bliss that he had set out to find by allowing himself to remain engrossed in it.

Hence, by experience he becomes disenchanted with the deluding world and its material charms that are as illusive as the mirage in a hot desert. So a wizened, self-realised and enlightened Jiva develops a gradual sense of disillusionment with the gross world and its equally gross sense objects. That is, he develops *Vairagya* from this world. And the cause of this *Vairagya* is Dharma—because the latter has enlightened the Jiva where true peace and happiness lies. The wise, self-realised and enlightened spiritual aspirant understands that pursuit of this world can never give him true peace, happiness, comfort, joy and bliss which are the main purpose for which he had followed the temptations of the world and its material sense objects. He also realises that the latter entities are the cause of all his grief, miseries and torments. So he develops a deep sense of detachment from the world and its material sense objects because they do not serve his interest, they do not fulfill his spiritual objective of finding eternal peace and bliss as well as freedom from the cycle of birth and death.

Since this sort of renunciation and detachment comes from within, it is firm and steady as opposed to the condition when a person is forced to follow the path of renunciation, called *Sanyas*, simply because it is a tradition and therefore must be obeyed by him if he wishes to avoid scorn by the society. Such a person is worse than a person who has not taken to *Sanyas* at all because on the one hand he subjects his body to the severity of life as a *Sanyasi* for which he is not prepared mentally, robbing him of the basic comforts of life to which he was accustomed as a householder, and on the other hand he gets none of the spiritual benefits that come with accepting the life of *Sanyas* whole-heartedly and voluntarily. Forced renunciation is no renunciation.

If the *Vairagya* is true and internal then no amount of worldly temptations or allurements would be able to lure the spiritual aspirant away from his chosen path; they would not be able to trap him in their tentacles. It is only a person who pretends to have adopted *Vairagya* without actually having done so is the one who falls and gets entangled in the web of miseries and grief associated with falsehood and deceit.

Now let us come to the next term *Yoga* and examine how it helps the Jiva.

The word 'Yoga' is derived from two verbal roots—viz. 'Yuj' = Yu + Ja, meaning to yoke, or to concentrate. The dictionary meaning of the word is 'to join, a junction point, to attach, harness, to team with, to put together, to fix any union, to foster, to connect, suitability or compatibility of two or more things'. It also means 'to strive, endeavour, due diligence and industry; to concentrate, meditate, contemplate and focus the mind and thought on some abstraction; self restraint and channelising one's vital strength and energy in a particular direction'. The process of concentration, contemplation and meditation as envisioned by the Upanishads needed a well-disciplined mind and body. For this to happen, a set of exercises were devised—called the various 'Aasans and Bandhas' (sitting postures and controlling of the vital functions of the body). So, taken purely in its modern concept, it refers to the regime of different exercises, but on a broader plane its main objectives is to enable the aspirant to meditate and focus his energy on self purification, self elevation and self realisation. The fact that these exercises help eliminate—or at least alleviate—so many ailments that afflicts a body in today's stressful life is an additional bonus, but not the aim of Yoga, though of course a healthy body is definitely conducive in spiritual practice.

Therefore it is that school of philosophy that helps a Jiva, the living being or the individual soul, to attain concentration on the Supreme Being or the cosmic Soul known as Ishwara. As the denser or more concentrated matter has a greater gravitational pull compared to the lighter and lesser denser one, the concentration results in the supreme Soul pulling the

individual soul by the mere force of its attractive force so as to bring about the former plunging headlong into the latter to become one with it. This phenomenon is likened to the individual obtaining the state of Kaivalya or oneness with the Supreme Being so that only the latter is left behind and the former vanishes from existence for all practical purposes.

In practice, 'Yoga' usually means doing meditation and contemplation that enables the man to focus his attention on important issues so that he can coordinate all his faculties and efforts in his search for the truth and reality of anything. In the spiritual field, this is to find the truth about one's own self, about the world around, about how to free one's self from the fetters of ignorance, and about how to bring about a union between the different aspects of the universal Truth that appears to be scattered around due to the compound effects of generations of ignorance about the reality. It involves establishing a unity between the individual Atma, the 'self' of the person, and the cosmic Atma known as the Supreme Self by various well established processes that are documented in the scriptures. This effort makes a practitioner of Yoga enlightened about the truth of the pure consciousness residing in his bosom as the Atma, and this realisation, known as 'self-realisation', leads to attainment of eternal and profound internal ecstasy, bliss, felicity and beatitude. When this is achieved, the practitioner of Yoga is said to have found freedom from all delusions arising out of ignorance centered around the body and the world of material sense organs. The objective or aim of Yoga has been described in Yog Kundali Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 74, Canto 3, verse nos. 13-17. The culmination of Yoga is to help one realise one's true divine form and find rest in the spiritual glory of self-realisation, the discovery of the ultimate fount of bliss and joy residing in one's own bosom as the 'consciousness' known as the Atma.

Yoga practices involve some steps known as the limbs or aspects of Yoga. Usually there are said to be eight such steps. These are called 'Astaanga Yoga'.

These eight fold path of Yoga have been listed in *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 11—11 ½ and *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse no. 24-25 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, as well as in *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 28-34, and *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 3-10 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

The first five steps of Yoga, i.e. Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam and Pratyahara are considered external processes or 'Bahiranga Yoga' (i.e. Yoga practices that involve the external gross aspect of the body such as its various organs of perception and action), while the last three, i.e. Dharna, Dhyana and Samadhi are called the internal processes or 'Antarang Yoga' (i.e. Yoga that involves the subtle components of the body such as the mind and intellect). Patanjali says in his 12th maxim of the first chapter of Yog Sutra that success in Yoga can be achieved by a coordination of practice and detachment. While 'practice' obviously implies the observation of rules and steps of Yoga as defined in Yoga treatises, 'detachment' means the consciousness that has given up desires for objects either seen or heard of. This detachment should be comprehensive in the sense that the practitioner of Yoga should also be indifferent towards the three Gunas or qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama that dominate all behavioral patterns in this world.

These eight steps of Yoga designed by Patanjali are meant to guide the spiritual aspirant gradually and in a systematic manner to progress higher in his spiritual endeavours and ultimately achieve the supreme state of eternal blissfulness that comes with inner awakening and experiencing the divine source of light and enlightenment that resides in one's own bosom.

Their aim is to establish a union between the various aspects of the universal Truth that have revealed itself in a variety of ways in this world into one single entity of the Absolute Truth. If a Jiva practices Yoga and achieves this aim, i.e. if he becomes enlightened about the Absolute Truth then obviously he will have obtained 'Gyan' or truthful knowledge.

What then is this Absolute Truth? It is the realisation that the same cosmic super Consciousness has revealed itself in myriad of ways in this world, that it is the only entity that is real and truthful, that the true nature of the Jiva is this Consciousness known as the Atma residing in a subtle form inside the gross body, in its inner-self as its inner-being and the 'true self' of the Jiva, that this Atma is the same as the cosmic Consciousness known as the Parmatma, that the gross world seen all around is an imagination of the mind of the Jiva and

has no reality in it, that the Atma is eternal and imperishable whereas the world and the body are mortal and perishable, that true freedom from miseries and grief is to realise that such feelings are limited to the gross body and its sense organs of perception and action that relate to the Jiva's interaction with the gross world, and they have no bearing upon the Atma which is a sublime and divine entity that is eternally blissful and full of beatitude, that true liberation and deliverance (called Mukti) as well as emancipation and salvation (called Moksha) means freedom from ignorance and delusions that comes with the understanding of what constitutes the Atma, the Parmatma, and the world.

Obviously, when the Jiva becomes thus enlightened, he is said to have acquired *Gyan* or truthful form of spiritual knowledge; the Jiva becomes self-realised and enlightened. He becomes a Gyani—one who has Gyan.

When one has acquired true knowledge, he is deemed to have attained *Moksha* or emancipation and salvation. This means that the Jiva realises the true nature of his 'self' and discards the fetter of the body and the world to merge his Atma with the cosmic Atma known as Brahm so much so that he is eternally liberated from the cycle of birth and death and their attending sorrows and problems. He is delivered from this entangling world and its web of miseries and delusions.

In the next line, Lord Ram tells Laxman that inspite of the powerful abilities of Gyan and Yoga in aiding the spiritual aspirant to attain his objectives of liberation and deliverance, the Lord is best endeared by following the path of Bhakti, i.e. the path of complete and sincere devotion, love and submission to the Lord.

In this context therefore we must have a look at Yoga from a different angle, a view which incorporates *Bhakti* and *Gyan* as one of its various limbs or branches. Now, let us have a quick glimpse at these aspects of Yoga.

Gyan Yoga—Gyan Yoga involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be 'real' but is actually like a 'shadow of the truth'. This Gyan Yoga helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following Gyan Yoga are called 'seers' because they can 'see' beyond the visible, multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. Gyan Yoga is in the realm of the intellect and discriminating mind of a creature.

Gyan Yoga cannot be separated from the concept of *Gyan Shakti* is related to the stupendous powers and authority possessed by 'knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity and enlightenment', and the instrument that implements this authority and power is the intellect. Gyan is empowerment, because without knowledge the mind and body would work like those of animals. Therefore, Gyan Shakti is the powers, potentials, authority, strength, respect and empowerment obtained as a result of acquisition of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, sagacity, scholarship and expertise in any subject. This Shakti represents the dynamic powers and potentials that are a natural accompaniment of these grand qualities. This is called Gyan Shakti simply because merely wish and determination wouldn't suffice if a person does not have the required knowledge and skill, the necessary expertise and level of wisdom required to accomplish his objectives successfully. In this context, Gyan Yoga would be to divert the diligence with which a man applies this knowledge, wisdom, erudition and skills to acquire the objects of this material world and get acclaim and applause for his expertise, knowledge and wisdom to achieving success in uplifting himself and realising the ultimate goal and truth of this life and existence, and freeing himself from the clutches of delusions which have tied him down through numerous lives to find final liberation and deliverance for his soul. Gyan Yoga endeavours to channelise one's knowledge into auspicious avenues and inspire the creature to make efforts relying upon the knowledge and wisdom he possesses to bring about a union between the individual creature's soul and the cosmic Soul and Consciousness known as Brahm so that ultimate emancipation and salvation is obtained and the cycle of delusions, birth and death and their endless horrors are got rid of. Therefore, Gyan Yoga entails diligent study and pursuance of the Truth, turning inwards and upwards instead of outwards and downwards, to separate the non-truth from the truth like separating the grain from the chaff, and finally coming to grasp with the eclectic concept of

‘truth and absolute reality’ of the ‘self and the Atma’, of ‘Brahm and Moksha (final and ultimate liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation)’.

The *relationship between Yoga and Gyan*—This has been described in Krishna Yajur Veda’s Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12-26, and Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 14-15.

Bhakti Yoga— Bhakti Yoga refers to having devotion for a chosen Godhead who is a person’s ideal, on whom he showers all his adoration, and on whom he focuses his attention. He is emotionally and sentimentally involved with his deity. Hence, the heart is the realm of Bhakti Yoga; it helps to commune with the divine.

The concept of Bhakti Yoga is similarly integral to the concept of *Ichaa Shakti* relates to the power of the mind to have or make wishes, desires, aspirations and the determination to fulfill them. It is longing for anything, wanting to possess it any cost, and then endeavouring to acquire it. It is a precursor to Karma Shakti. It is only when one wishes to do anything and has the determination to do it that he actually goes about doing anything at all, strives hard to get success in it, and then would like to enjoy the fruits of his labour. It is closely related to Bhakti Yoga inasmuch as when the Ichaas (desires) are turned away from the world and hooked onto the search for the Truth and Reality with devotion and sincerity of purpose, it helps the man to turn away from the entrapping world of delusions and artificial comforts towards the world of truth and reality, i.e. towards his true ‘self’, the pure consciousness. The word ‘Bhakti’ means to be sincerely committed and devoted to anything, any cause, any principle, any doctrine or any entity. In this case, the devotion is towards the supreme transcendental Truth and the absolute Reality, whether known as Brahm or as the Atma. Bhakti Yoga therefore means a devoted and committed approach that coordinates the desires and actions in such a way that they are diverted to realisation of the supreme Truth known as Brahm instead of the mortal and perishable world of delusions and entrapments.

The importance of Bhakti has been elaborately described in the Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 8, paragraph nos. 9-12.]

जातेँ बेगि द्रवउँ मैं भाई । सो मम भगति भगत सुखदाई ॥ २ ॥

jātēṁ bēgi drava'um̐ maim̐ bhāī. sō mama bhagati bhagata sukhadāī. 2.

Oh brother (Laxman)! It is Bhakti (devotion, love and submission for the Lord) which makes me feel happy and pleased very easily. It is this eclectic virtue of having Bhakti for me that bestows comfort, happiness, joy, peace, fulfillment and bliss to my devotees.

[In other words, I, the Supreme Lord, is very easily and conveniently pleased if the spiritual aspirant develops Bhakti for the Lord as compared to seeking the same Lord by the following other paths, such as the arduous path of Gyan and Yoga. Since the path of Bhakti is the easiest path leading to the Supreme Being, it is most comfortable for the seeker, and its rewards are more profound because it is liked the Lord himself.

Bhakti pleases the Lord most and very easily. Besides this benefit, it gives the practitioner of Bhakti immense happiness, peace, contentedness and bliss.] (2)

[Note—Let us learn more about this eclectic concept of *Bhakti* that is so much lauded by Lord Ram himself.

Bhakti—(noun; feminine gender) The concept of *Bhakti* has a very broad sweep, and it incorporates such glorious virtues as having, inter alia, sincere devotion, dedication and firm faith in the Lord God, total submission and surrender before the Lord God, having unwavering love, conviction and belief in the Lord God, to be completely dedicated to the

Lord and surrender oneself to him, having reverence and veneration for the Lord God, having no other solace, succour, hope and respite except the Lord, treating oneself as a humble servant of the Lord God and feeling fortunate at being able to serve the Lord God, remembering the Lord God at all times and offering each and every deed done and action taken to the Lord without expecting anything in return, remaining unruffled and calm under all circumstances with the view that these are the wishes of the Lord God and one has no right to get overly excited over them. In brief, Bhakti entails honouring the divine forces of creation in the form of some chosen deity who personifies the grandest virtues in creation.

The *Holy Bible* also asserts the importance of 'Bhakti' as follows— 'In him we live and move, and have our being' (Acts, 17/28), 'Trust in him at all times, you people, pour out your heart before him; for God is a refuge for us' (Psalms, 62/8).

Narad Bhakti Sutra, literally meaning the fundamental formula that defines what comprises devotion for Lord God as enunciated by sage Narad who was one of the greatest devotees of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, is a treatise on Bhakti that is succinct and is universally respected as being one of the best in its genre. It has only 84 Sanskrit verses.

It says that the easiest (verse no. 58) and the best instrument for God-realisation (verse no. 80, 81) is 'Bhakti' because it gives the spiritual fruit or reward for which a person does any auspicious effort in the first place (verse no. 26, 30). It is superior to Gyan (knowledge), to Yoga (meditation), to Karma (rituals and religious observances), and other spiritual traditions (verse no. 25). Bhakti is a complete and wholesome way to attain self and god realisation; it needs no other support or help (verse no. 59).

Bhakti gives eternal peace and bliss of the highest order (verse no. 60).

Bhakti is divided into two aspects—(i) Paraa Bhakti, and (ii) A-paraa Bhakti. The A-paraa Bhakti is divided further into (a) Gauna Bhakti, and (b) Mukhya Bhakti. The Paraa Bhakti is the aim of spiritual practice, while the A-paraa Bhakti is a means to achieve success in it.

Paraa Bhakti is attainment of extreme and eternal bliss obtained upon God-realisation which is equivalent to self-realisation because the Parmatma, the Supreme Soul and the cosmic Spirit, is the same as the individual's Atma or his own soul. It is like nectar, and gives immortality and supreme form of bliss (verse nos. 2 and 3); it helps eliminate worldly desires and temptations (verse no. 7).

The A-paraa Bhakti involves some methods to make this possible—such as having interest in worshipping the Lord (verse no. 16), having desire and interest in listening to the stories associated with the Lord (verse no. 17), to be engrossed in the thoughts of the 'self' or the Atma (verse no. 18), surrendering all deeds to the Lord and always remembering him (verse no. 19).

But it must be noted that Gyan or truthful knowledge of the reality is also conducive to attaining nearness or oneness with God (verse no. 28). In other words, Gyan and Bhakti go hand in hand; they aid each other instead of contracting one another (verse no. 29). Bhakti is the only way that leads to Mukti—liberation and deliverance from this world of transmigration leading to permanent rest for the soul (verse no. 33). Bhakti helps one to break free from the shackling effects of this deluding and entrapping world (verse no. 33).

The methods by which Bhakti can be established and made to bloom in one's heart are narrated in verse nos. 34-42 as follows—to abandon attachments to material sense objects and sensual pleasures of this world, to desist from self gratification of the sense organs (verse no. 35), to do Bhajan—or the constant remembrance of the Lord, his divine name and divine deeds (verse nos. 36, 79), to hear and sing the divine stories, the virtues and the holy name of the Lord along with others in the community (verse no. 37), to have contact and communion with holy men such as great saints (verse no. 38-39, 42) which is obtained when the Lord is kind (verse no. 40), to treat true devotees of the Lord as being equivalent to the Lord himself (verse no. 41), to offer all the deeds and their fruits or rewards to the Lord (verse no. 61) along with any trace of negativity such as desires, anger, pride etc. that may still linger on (verse no. 65), and in general doing everything that is auspicious and holy which makes it possible for him to enhance his level of Bhakti (verse no. 76).

Other aids to Bhakti are the following—Abandonment of the feeling of worldly happiness and joy on the one hand, and of sorrow, misery and grief on the other hand, eliminating any sort of desires and passions such as for gain or profit of any kind, and to be careful not to waste a single moment and be prepared for death that may come any time (verse no. 77). Practicing the virtues of ‘Ahinsaa’ (non-violence), ‘Satya’ (truthfulness), ‘Shaucha’ (cleanliness and purity), ‘Dayaa’ (mercy and compassion), and ‘Aastikta’ (belief in God and the Holy Spirit as well as the teaching of the scriptures) etc. (verse no. 78).

The main obstacle in Bhakti is bad company (verse no. 43), as well as Kaam (wordly desires and passions), Krodh (anger) and Moha (infatuations, attachments, delusions, entanglements) that lead to Smriti-bhransa (failure to remember the horrible consequences of committing sins and getting entangled in the world), Buddhi-naash (destruction of intelligent thinking and wisdom), and Sarwa-naash (complete ruin) (verse no. 44).

Maya (the web of delusions so characteristic of this world) is a great obstacle and it is overcome only by detachment from all things (verse no. 46). Other methods of overcoming Maya are to live a serene life away from the world (verse no. 67), to break all worldly fetters and bondages, to become neutral by rising above the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama, and to discard attempts to acquire and then worry about the protection of worldly possessions (verse no. 47), to not bother about the fruits of one’s deeds and labour but do one’s duty as ordained by destiny, peacefully and stoically (verse no. 48), and to abandon even the Vedas (excessive study of the scriptures once the basic knowledge and guidance has been obtained) and become free from all doubts, confusions, perplexities and consternations (verse no. 49).

One must avoid the following also—talking about or remembering anything pertaining to women, material wealth, hearsay and talks that create doubts in the mind about the truth of the Holy Spirit, talks about one’s enemies or those who are unfavourable—because all these things unnecessarily create vexation for the spirit (verse no. 63); negative characters such as Abhmaan and Dambha (pride and arrogance accompanied by deceit, conceit and pretensions) etc. (verse no. 64); getting involved in worthless debates and arguments (verse no. 74).

The ‘Gauna’ Bhakti is like a dumb man attempting to describe some delicious food (verse no. 52)—i.e. it is a silent form of devotion for the Lord which has no external signs. Here, the devotee sips the nectar of spiritual bliss that comes with self and god realisation without showing any signs of his spiritual enlightenment. It can be experienced and never be described; nothing more remains to be attained or desired for after that (verse no. 54).

The ‘Gauna Bhakti’ is of three types (verse no. 56)—(i) Saatvika, (ii) Raajsik, and (iii) Taamsik. These are also called ‘Aarta-bhakti’, ‘Arthaaartha-bhakti’, and ‘Jigyaasu-bhakti’. Gauna Bhakti is easy because it does not require any effort as it is done directly by having natural love for the God that arises in one’s heart. It leads to internal peace and bliss (verse nos. 58-60).

A true and sincere devotee of the Lord acquires a holy aura around him which makes him effuse divinity and holiness similar to the Lord, thereby making their presence beneficial for the whole world around them (verse no. 68-71). Like the universality and oneness of the Supreme Being, Supreme Spirit, the Supreme Truth and the Supreme Reality, such realised devotees of the Lord have no distinction as to their caste, religion, knowledge, physical form, birth, level of worldly prosperity or poverty, or the type of deeds done by them—because they have risen above such mundane considerations (verse no. 72-73).

The 11 types of devotees of the Lord—Narad Bhakti Sutra, verse no. 82 outlines the eleven forms of Bhakti, which are actually variations of the same Gauna Bhakti because their main objective is the same—to develop devotion and love for the Lord which lead to spiritual bliss, to liberation of the soul from worldly delusions as well as miseries, and to attain oneness of the individual’s soul with the Supreme Soul of creation so that the cycle of birth and death is terminated for good. They are as follows:—(i) Guna and Mahatamya of the Lord—this involves narrating, singing and generally propagating the glories of the Lord and his divine virtues; (ii) Rupa—this involves remembering the divine form of the Lord and worshipping this form; (iii) Pooja—this involves offering of formal forms of worship to the Lord; (iv) Smaran—constantly and always remembering the Lord; (v) Daasya—to become a

humble servant of the Lord; to serve the Lord with great simplicity and humility, not expecting anything in return; to be ever eager to do anything which would please the Lord; (vi) Sakhya—to treat the Lord as one's close friend and companion; (vii) Kanta—to honour the divine radiance of the Lord, and visualize that the Lord's radiance shining on one's self as the light of the sun; (viii) Vaatsalya—to love the Lord dearly as one loves one's children; (ix) Atma-nivedan—to submit one's self to the Lord; to pray to the Lord internally; to treat one's Atma as a fraction of the Supreme Atma represented by the Lord God; (x) Tanmayataa—to remain perpetually engrossed in the thoughts of the Lord and to remain lost in the bliss derived from it; and (xi) Param-viraha—to suffer gravely due to separation from the Lord just like a lover remains in submerged in grief if his loved one is separated from him.

Finally, Narad Bhakti Sutra lists some of the great devotees of the Lord as follows—Sanat-kumars, Veda-vyas, Shukdeo, Shandilya, Garga, Vishnu, Kaundinya, Shesh, Uddhav, Aaruni, Bali, Hanuman, Vibhishan, etc. (verse no. 83).

The 9 types or paths of Bhakti, called the 'Navadhaa Bhakti', according to *Ram Charit Manas* (Ramayana) of Goswami Tulsidas—Basically, there are nine types of Bhaktis or the 9-fold path of devotion. In short, there are the following:- (1) hearing about the Lord's virtues, glories, deeds, fames, holy name etc.; (2) talking and discussing about the Lord; (3) remembering him; (4) serving his holy feet; (5) adoring and worshipping him; (6) honouring and revering him; (7) submission and humility before him, treating him as a friend and companion; (8) concentrating on one's pure-self or Atma; (9) and treating the Atma (soul) as being the manifestation of the Lord.

The great epic *Ram Charit Manas* of Goswami Tulsidas is a wonderful and matchless treatise on the eclectic concept of Bhakti which permeates throughout the Holy Book as one of its major characteristic themes. The following list gives an overall idea where this book incorporates Bhakti in its narration:--

(i) Ayodhya Kand—Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 93; Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 131; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 137; Doha no. 204; Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 291; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 301.

(ii) Aranya Kand—Chaupai line nos. 2-9 that precede Doha no. 16; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35, till Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36.

(iii) Kishkindha Kand—Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 12; Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 15.

(iv) Sundar Kand—Doha no. 46, and Chaupai line nos. 1-4, 6 that precede Doha no. 47; Doha no. 48 and Chaupai line nos. 1-7.

(v) Uttar Kand—Chanda line no. 5-16 that precedes Doha no. 14; from Chaupai line no. 1, 7-10 that precedes Doha no. 86, to Doha no. 87 Ka; Chaupai line nos. 14-15 that precede Doha no. 120; Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 116; Doha no. 122 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 15-19.

Now let us sample a few verses briefly to see the importance and benefits of Bhakti. *Ram Charit Manas*, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 93 emphasises that the best thing to do for one's spiritual welfare is to have unwavering and the purest form of devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram—i.e. to serve the Lord and have full faith in him. All the faculties of a man, such as his Mana (mind and heart), his Karma (deeds and actions), and his Bachan (words) should be directed towards this end. [सखा परम परमास्थु एहू । मन क्रम बचन राम पद नेहू ॥ ६ ॥]

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 137 says “Lord Ram is concerned with the level of affection that one has for the Lord, and other things are immaterial as far as the Lord is concerned; let this be known to all.”

Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 116 briefly say as follows—“Lord Ram loves Bhakti (devotion) while Maya (delusions) is merely like an obedient dancer who does the bidding of her Lord to please him. [The dancer would adopt the posture that pleases her master, and would synchronise all her dance moves in accordance with the music being played and song being sung.] Since Lord Ram favours

Bhakti, Maya is scared of it. Bhakti is free from any taint or negativity; it is matchless in its purity and effectiveness. Maya is afraid of anyone in whose heart Bhakti resides with full authority—because Maya is simply a maid when it is compared to Bhakti. So Maya cannot play its tricks upon a devotee of the Lord in whose heart Bhakti lives as the reigning mistress.”

Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 15 says “Kaam, or worldly desires and lust, do not sprout in the mind and heart of followers and devotees of Lord Hari just like it is impossible for grass to grow in a patch of infertile (desert or rocky and barren) land even if it rains there.”

Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 14-15 that precede Doha no. 120 say—“Saints are the wise ones, and their wisdom is like the spade or the shovel which helps them dig out the truth from the surface of untruth and delusions. Gyan (truthful spiritual knowledge) and Vairagya (renunciation; detachment from delusions and abandonment of ignorance) are like their two eyes. When one sincerely searches for the truth, he finds that Bhakti (devotion for Lord God) is like a gem that is like a treasure house of all happiness and well-beings.”

Vairagya is the precondition to developing Gyan—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 of Sortha (a sort of Doha) no. 89 Ka. It says—“Can Gyan (true knowledge) be acquired without the help of a wise Guru (teacher); can Gyan (true spiritual knowledge leading to enlightenment) be acquired without Vairagya (renunciation, dispassion and detachment from delusory world ridden by ignorance); and can true happiness and bliss ever be obtained with having Bhakti (devotion and love) for Hari (Lord God). This is the declaration of the Vedas and the Purans (hence it is unquestionably correct because it is ancient and time-tested wisdom).”

“Anyone who has the priceless gem in the form of Bhakti (unflinching devotion and purest form of love) for Lord Ram in his heart can never have any sorrow or grief even in his dreams; he is free from them”—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 120.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede Doha no. 86, the Lord himself declares to sage Kaagbhusund—“I repeatedly tell you, truthfully, that there is nothing or no one in this world as dear to me as the person who serves me with devotion, faith and sincerity. Even Brahma, the creator, is like other ordinary beings for me if he lacks devotion and faith in me. On the contrary, if a creature has devotion and faith in me then I love like my life even though he may be most lowly and downtrodden.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 87 and line no. 2 of Doha 87 Ka, Lord Ram says—“amongst all the creatures, they who have devotion, love, affection, belief and faith in me after having abandoned all sorts of negativity such as deceit, pretensions and delusions, verily I say that they are very dear to me no matter who they are, even if they are impotent men or women, or even if they are humble creatures of whatever denomination.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 204 which says—“I am not interested in Artha (material wealth and prosperity), Dharma (following the scriptural sanctioned path of righteousness and probity), Kaam (fulfillment of worldly desires) or Nirvana (Moksha—emancipation and salvation of the soul). The only boon and reward I want is that I may have unwavering, undiluted and un-stunted love and devotion for holy feet of Lord Ram for all generations to come, for all times to come, and for all my future births.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 119, the crow saint Kaagbhusund tells Garud (the legendary eagle and the mount of lord Vishnu who had come to the former to hear the divine story of Lord Ram and be enlightened on spiritual matters)—“Moksha (spiritual liberation and deliverance) is not possible without having strong Bhakti (devotion and love) for Lord Hari (Vishnu, the Supreme Being). Hence, those who are wise and enlightened prefer to have Bhakti, they give precedence to Bhakti, over all other means of obtaining Moksha. Moksha cannot be sustained without Bhakti even as liquid water needs a solid ground or surface to act as its base for its physical existence in this world.”

Why should one have total devotion for Lord Ram and love the Lord more than anyone else in this world have been outlined by Lord Shiva to his divine consort Uma in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 12, Lord Shiva tells his divine consort Uma—“Listen Uma! In this self-centered and selfish world, there is no one more dear and well-wisher than Lord Ram. No, it is not the Guru (moral preceptor or teacher), father, mother, friend or any master or lord. It is the natural habit of all (except Lord Sri Ram), be it the god, a human being, a sage or anybody else, that they love someone only as long as their self interests are served.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 291, sage Vashistha tells Lord Ram “let all Sukha (happiness and comfort), Karma and Dharma (deeds and laws of conduct) burn down where there is no love for the holy feet of Lord Ram. All righteous efforts become unrighteous, all good fortunes and luck turn to be misfortunes and ill-luck, and all types of knowledge and wisdom become as worthless as false and misleading knowledge—when there is no love for Lord Ram, or where love and devotion for the Lord does not dominate such efforts, such knowledge and such fortunes.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 301, Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, has said “I have one aim—to have natural love and devotion for the Lord and be able to serve him without any selfish interest or goal, without expecting anything in return, such as the legendary fruits or rewards (in the form of Artha, Dharma, Kaam and Moksha) that would automatically accrue due to such service.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 265 it is clearly stated that “Raghupati (Lord Ram, the king of the Raghu dynasty) is overwhelmed by the devotion of his devotees, and he finds himself obliged to such devotees.”]

सो सुतंत्र अवलंब न आना । तेहि आधीन ग्यान बिग्याना ॥ ३ ॥

sō sutantra avalamba na ānā. tēhi ādhīna gyāna bigyānā. 3.

It (i.e. Bhakti) is independent, able to stand alone, fully empowered (to fulfill all the spiritual requirements of the aspirant), and is self-sufficient as it does not require or expect any other support to prop it up, to enhance its value and effectiveness.

On the contrary, Gyan and Vigyan are dependent upon Bhakti. [In other words, if one were to have access to Gyan and Vigyan, i.e. enlightenment and awareness of the reality and truth in a convincing, logical and effective manner, then he must have the virtue of Bhakti ingrained in him. Without being qualified in the spiritual field of Bhakti a spiritual aspirant cannot hope to fully benefit from either Gyan or Vidyan.] (3)

[Note—Bhakti does not depend upon Dharma, Gyan, Vairagya or Yoga to lead the aspirant to his spiritual objective. Bhakti can do it independently on its own, on its own steam, and without seeking any help from any other spiritual tool. But Gyan or enlightenment as well as Vigyan or in-depth knowledge of the spiritual truth depends upon Bhakti. This is obviously because the term ‘Bhakti’ means to have faith and devotion, and to succeed in any endeavour one must have complete faith and confidence that the goal he has chosen for himself is the best goal in the world, a goal which will give him his desired fruits in their best form, that the medium he has chosen to reach this goal is also the best, the easiest and a well-established way of reaching the desired goal, and that it will be better for him to concentrate all his energy and efforts to reach the goal without getting distracted by so many way-side distractions that may divert his attention. Bhakti serves this purpose. It is easy, it is proved to be a time-tested, efficient and effective tool, and it is enough to follow this path without having to seek help from any other tools.

On the other hand, Gyan and Vigyan require a high degree of mental abilities, proficiency and focus in order to give the desired result. A person who has the aptitude for Yoga and acquisition of knowledge by studying the scriptures deeply can benefit from Gyan and Vigyan. These paths have many pitfalls and are arduous. Bhakti, on the other hand, is so easy and convenient that it can be followed even by an ordinary creature who would otherwise fail miserably if he were to attain emancipation and salvation for his soul by following the other paths.]

भगति तात अनुपम सुखमूला । मिलइ जो संत होइँ अनुकूला ॥ ४ ॥

bhagati tāta anupama sukhamūlā. mila'i jō santa hō'im' anukūlā. 4.

Oh dear (brother Laxman)! Bhakti is pristine, unique, incomparable, awesome and fabulous. It is a fount from which sprouts happiness, bliss and peace; it is a harbinger of these glorious virtues; it is the root from which arises the grand tree that gives the aspirant the spiritual rewards represented by these eclectic virtues.

[And how is Bhakti obtained or accessed?] Attaining Bhakti is possible, it is made accessible when 'Sants' (saintly, pious, holy, devout, spiritually pure and enlightened people) become pleased with the seeker of Bhakti, when they are favourable towards him, and bless him with this virtue. (4)

[Note—The glories, honours, powers and virtues of *Sants* or saints have been enumerated and lauded in Ram Charit Mans. References: (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 2; (ii) Baal Kand, Doha no. 3 and Chaupai line nos. 5-12 that precede it; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7; (iv) Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 13-16 that precedes Doha no. 14; (v) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 37, to Doha no. 38; (vi) Doha no. 46 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precedes Doha no. 46.

In Tulsidas' Vairagya Sandipani, the saints are extensively praised in its verse nos. 8-33.

According to Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, Aranya Kand, canto 3, verse no. 37-39, the characteristics of a truly pious and holy man are the following:--

“Those persons who are even-minded and stable, have equanimity and forbearance, are serene, placid, unruffled, unwavering, calm and balanced under adversities as well as favourable circumstances, both during sorrows, sufferings and troubles as well as under happy and joyous situations in this world; those who are without any desires and wants whatsoever; those who do not have any attachment to their worldly assets such as their wealth and sons, nor harbour any desires pertaining to them; those who have restrained, conquered and suppressed their sense organs and their wayward tendencies or the urge for their gratification; those who are of a serene, calm, peaceful and tranquil temperament and mind; those who are sincerely devoted and dedicated to you; those who are devoid of and free from all desires, greed, avarice, yearnings and ambitions of all kinds (37); those who are even-keeled, have equanimity, remain neutral, unaffected, indifferent and aloof even while going through the throes of destruction (unfavourable circumstances) or construction (favourable circumstances); those who are without encumbrances and attachments of any kind; those who abandon and forsake involvement in all types of worldly deeds and getting involved in various actions, i.e. do not regard himself as the 'doer' of any deed, nor expects any reward or punishment for it; those who are always the followers of Brahm (i.e. pursue the path of righteousness that leads to the supreme, eternal One) (38); those who are endowed with 'Yam' and other virtues (e.g. self-restraint of passions and doing penances and austerities); and those who are contented and satisfied with whatever comes their way—such persons who

possess these virtues are truly 'Sadhus' (saintly, pious, holy, divine, pure in mind and heart). Whenever one is fortunate to get communion and a chance to interact with such saints, one develops endearment for and interest in your divine stories (i.e. in spiritualism) (39)".

Bhakti is 'incomparable, unique, awesome and fabulous' because no other mean is as effective and easy as Bhakti to help the spiritual aspirant reach his spiritual goal with the least amount of hassle and facing the least number of troubles. It leads to the best form of Mukti, or liberation and deliverance, from this entrapping world and its delusions, as well as its cycle of birth and death and their attendant horrors. It is easy to follow because it does not entail the severity of Yoga and Sanyas, or the high level of mental intellectual requirements needed to succeed in acquisition of Gyan and Vigyan, or being one's toe in the course of doing one's deeds conscientiously and righteously in accordance with the laws of Dharma, and so on.

In fact, these benefits come to a person who has Bhakti in him in a natural and automatic manner, without any special effort to be made on his part. The obvious reason for this is that Bhakti makes a man surrender himself to the Supreme Being, and his care and well-being henceforth becomes the responsibility of the Lord. It is like the case of a child putting himself in the care of its loving parent; then the child has nothing to worry about, except, of course, to remain obedient, faithful and loyal to his parent, to have complete confidence in the parent that the latter is sure to take proper care of the child's future. This sort of unflinching and sincere commitment makes it obligatory upon the guardian to be extra vigilant for the welfare of his ward, because now the ward's doing and undoing, his success and rise or failure and fall will have a direct bearing upon the guardian's own credibility and competence.

Therefore, the devotee of the Lord, known as the 'Bhakta', lives peacefully and happily without a worry in the world as he has the Supreme Being himself worrying on his behalf! He sings like a lark the glories of the Lord, songs that are known as 'Bhajan'. All living beings want happiness, bliss, peace and comfort, and towards this aim they strive hard in this world. If he gets these much sought-after fruits or rewards in an easy way, and that too in a form which is sustainable and having immensity of dimension and depth, then there is no reason why he would not clasp it with both his hands. This is precisely the benefit of following the path of Bhakti. Mukti is attained easily by leaving everything in the hands of the Lord, and instead of wasting time worrying about so many things of this world the living being can now use the same time to live merrily by singing the Bhajans of the Lord.

"The person is greatly affected by the company he keeps"—this axiomatic principle is also applicable in the case of a student of Bhakti, the spiritual aspirant who wishes to adopt Bhakti has his chosen spiritual path from amongst the so many varied paths prescribed by the scriptures. Company of saints creates a positive environment conducive to spiritual pursuits. The saints practice Bhakti for the Lord, and their life is a living example of the benefits one gets by having Bhakti. So when a new aspirant keeps their company and watches them closely, he is convinced of the rewards that accompany Bhakti; he sees how Bhakti can be done in practical terms, and what kind of ecstasy is derived by constant communion with the Lord. In other words, the seeker of Bhakti sees it being demonstrated in practical life when he lives in the company of saints.]

भगति कि साधन कहउँ बखानी । सुगम पंथ मोहि पावहिं प्रानी ॥ ५ ॥

bhagati ki sādhanā kaha'um' bakhānī. sugama pantha mōhi pāvahiṁ prānī. 5.

I (Lord Ram) shall now tell you (Laxman) in detail the way Bhakti can be obtained or accessed. It is an easy path, a convenient way by which a living being can attain me, the Supreme Being. [That is, by adopting Bhakti, the seeker can find his spiritual liberation and deliverance, his emancipation and salvation very easily and

conveniently. He can merge his own Atma with the supreme Atma known as the Parmatma by the means of Bhakti.] (5)

[Note—After having first stressed that Bhakti is the easiest and most convenient way of attaining oneness with the Lord, or of obtaining freedom from this world and its horrors and entanglements, the Lord now outlines how Bhakti can be actually developed, how it can be actually accessed and practiced.]

As has been said in an earlier note, Bhakti is ‘easy and convenient’ because now the spiritual future and welfare of the practitioner of Bhakti becomes the responsibility of the Lord God. It is like a child putting himself in the caring hands of his parent. Once this is done, the child becomes carefree, and he can now enjoy the pleasures of life without any worry about his future or daily needs. Likewise, once one has Bhakti, the Lord becomes responsible for his welfare and daily needs.]

प्रथमहिं बिप्र चरन अति प्रीती । निज निज कर्म निरत श्रुति रीती ॥ ६ ॥

prathamahim bipra carana ati prīti. nija nija karma nirata śruti rīti. 6.

The first requirement is that a person who desires Bhakti should have respect and affection for the feet of a Vipra.

[A ‘Vipra’ literally means a person who is born in the social class that is known as Brahmin. But the intention here is different. We are dealing with Bhakti, so only a person who practices Bhakti is to be considered fit as being referred to as a Vipra here. The Brahmins have been traditionally given high regard in Hindu society because they used to be wise men who had a thorough knowledge of the scriptures, and therefore were the best sources for information and guidance. Like the case when a student would go to a teacher specializing in the subject in which the student wishes to be taught, the seeker of Bhakti should also go to a Brahmin or Vipra who himself practices Bhakti. Any other person would not be a proper guide for the seeker of Bhakti. Hence, the term ‘Vipra’ would mean a pious and holy person who worships the Lord God with extreme devotion and has surrendered himself to the Lord. In other words, only a Vipra who has Bhakti in him can become a seeker’s correct preceptor and guide.]

The second requirement is to follow the instructions and edicts of the Vedas diligently to lead a life of righteousness and probity in all affairs and in accordance with established traditions and the laws and tenets prescribed for the ‘Varna’ or the section of society to which the person belongs.

[That is, to live according to the various laws of conduct as prescribed by the scriptures to regulate and maintain discipline across the different sections of the society, known as the ‘Varnas’, be conscientious in following one’s duties and responsibilities as sanctioned for the respective Varna to which the person belongs, and to voluntarily maintain order and decorum of the Varna to which a person belongs—this is the second way of practicing Bhakti. It is the second practical path of Bhakti.] (6)

[Note— In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 129, sage Valmiki reiterates this virtue of adoring and having devotion for the holy feet of saints. Valmiki says “Lord Ram should live in the heart of those who bow reverentially and with special affection before gods, the Guru (teacher), and Brahmins (elders and learned people in the society).”]

We see that in this verse, two paths have been outlined—one is to respect the elderly and learned men who are experienced in Bhakti and learn from them the practical way of doing Bhakti, and the second is to live an orderly life according to established tradition.

In other words, one must pay respects to those who are learned and senior, because when they are pleased they will be eager to initiate the new entrant in this spiritual fold and guide him along with sincere and good advice. Similarly, when one follows the well established laws of conduct and doing deeds righteously and in accordance with established procedures ordained by the scriptures, he will find all avoidable problems automatically removed from his path, making the journey to his goal easier and less troublesome.

Why must one follow the path shown by the scriptures? Well, the scriptures show that path that is correct and apt; they have no vested interests to mislead anyone. The external world is overshadowed by misconceptions and delusions, and the mind and intellect of any living being are affected by the numerous corruptions and taints of this world. The advice that one gets from anyone, except the wise and enlightened ones, is not reliable, and there are greater chances of one falling in the same trap in which the advisor has himself fallen. So it is not good and prudent to risk one's future with such uncertain path, especially when an option of sure-hit and time-tested right and correct path is available in the form of the scriptures. No sensible man would like to jeopardize his entire life and risking his well-being by following a doubtful path when an option that is certain and sure is available at hand.

That is why it is advised in this verse that one should have the company of saints and follow the scriptures because both these two options are sure to take a spiritual aspirant to the correct goal along the correct path.

Now, let us read about the concept of 'Varnas' and 'Vipra or Brahmin'.

The Hindu society has been divided into four sections or classes by ancient sages to regulate its functioning by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. These four sections are— (a) Brahmins*—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras—the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

In ancient Indian tradition, the kings and the ruling class belonged to the caste called 'Kshatriya', and their main job/vocation was giving protection and providing sustenance to their subjects belonging to the other three castes. To do this, they had to wage wars—some in defense and some in aggression because they wanted to expand their area of influence. But wars nevertheless involved bloodshed which any peace loving soul of Satwic tendency would abhor. So a king could be Satwic by temperament but Rajsic by occupation and compulsion. Those who were Satwic were prescribed the non-violent method of worship and sacrifices to Goddess Durga during peace times as described in Devipuran Mahabhagwat, Canto 46, verse nos. 15-17½, while those of Rajsic bearings were to do worship requiring animal sacrifices as described in verse nos. 17-21, especially in preparation for and during wars. Even today it is observed that the army is non-vegetarian in its food habits because the soldiers cannot kill their enemies in battle—as is required of them because of their vocation as a soldier—if they avoid killing and instead show mercy and compassion on their enemies. Perhaps this is the reason why meat-eating is never looked down in army; in fact, it is a normal diet amongst the Kshatriya class. Though mercy and compassion are indeed supremely good qualities, they are not meant for the battlefield unless the enemy surrenders and relents. The world would have been a 'heaven-on-earth' if this quality prevailed in the battlefield! However, since Sri Ram

was at war with a vicious, unforgiving, cruel and formidable enemy (Ravana), and a lot was at stake (e.g. the very existence of the world and its peace), and it was a no-holds-barred, fierce and uncompromising war, the second category of worship—animal sacrifice symbolising the death of the enemy—was prescribed for him by the Goddess. And this was precisely what Brahma and other Gods did as is evident in verse nos. 33.

Yajur Veda 31st Chapter, 11th Mantra says that Brahmins are the mouth of society, the Kshatriyas are its arms, Vaishyas are its stomach or abdomen, and Shudras are its legs. The body is regarded as a symbol of the society. As is obvious in this analogy, all these four units of the body must function properly and in close cooperation with each other in order that the body can survive and live comfortably and carry on with its assigned duties in an orderly fashion. The mouth is important because it is the medium by which the body takes food and speaks; the arms procure food and gives protection to the body against enemies; the stomach digests food and supplies the whole body with the energy needed by it; the abdomen holds all the internal organs; and the legs carry the body wherever it wants to go such as the place where food is available. Since food is the basis necessity of life, this instance is cited here. And the logic can be extended to everything else. Each component of the society must work properly in order that the whole society survives; each component is as vital as the other; each has its own importance in the bigger picture.

*The salient features of Brahmins are the following—they should possess these noble qualities—(1) ‘Riju’-be expert in the Rig and the Yajur Vedas, (2) ‘Tapa’-should be involved in doing penances, observing austerities and enduring sufferings for the welfare of the soul and the society, (3) ‘Santosh’-be contented and satisfied, (4) ‘Kshamaa’-to be forgiving and tolerant, (5) ‘Sheel’-to have such virtues as good character, dignity, decorum and virtuousness, (6) ‘Jitendriya’-to have self control over the sense organs, (7) ‘Data’-to be a giver, one who sacrifices his own interests for the benefit of others, (8) ‘Gyani’-one who is well learned, wise, enlightened and erudite, (9) ‘Dayaalu’-to be merciful and compassionate. [Shatpath Brahman.]

An entire Upanishad called Vajra-shuchiko-panishad, belonging to the Sam Veda tradition is devoted to the subject. The eclectic virtues of Brahmins have been expounded in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahman 5 as well as in Canto 3, Brahman 8, verse no. 10.

The Param Hans Parivrajak Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, paragraph no. 7 describes in a holistic way the virtues of a true Brahm as the one who is highly wise, self-realised, erudite and enlightened about the Atma and the principles governing the true meaning of Brahm and such religious signs as doing fire sacrifices, wearing the sacred thread and the tuft of hair on the head, observing sacraments etc.

To quote this Upanishad—‘A true Brahmin is a wise and enlightened person who treats the Atma, the pure consciousness, as the non-dual Principal of creation (i.e. who regards the Atma as a personification of the supreme Brahm that is non-dual or Advaita and the only supreme Authority of creation), and for whom being steady in his meditation and contemplation as well as spiritual pursuit is the symbolic tuft of hair—such a person is deemed to be cleansed and made holy by whatever he does. This is because all his deeds are deemed to be auspicious and holy. [That is, he need not do special deeds such as fire sacrifices or observing of sacraments in order to wash off his sins or any kind of spiritual taints that might be adhering to him.]

He is deemed to have completed doing all religious and auspicious deeds required to be done by a man.

It must be understood that such an enlightened man is indeed a Brahmin for he is dedicated and devoted to Brahm (the Supreme Being), he is no less than a God, he is indeed a ‘Rishi’ (or a great sage), he is a ‘Tapasvi’ (or someone who is well endowed with the glorious virtues of Tapa, i.e. austerity and penance, and is steadfast in observing its tenets), he is the best follower of the tenets of the scriptures and an excellent spiritual aspirant, he is therefore the Guru (guide, teacher and preceptor) for the whole world.

A truly wise, enlightened and self-realised aspirant who understands the implications and import of what has been said above realises the truth of the statement that the pure

conscious Atma standing for Brahm is the true identity of his. And therefore such an enlightened man declares ‘It (Brahm; Atma; Truth; Consciousness) is me’.

The Pashupat Brahm Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 19 describes who a true Brahmin is as follows—“A true Brahmin is one who wears the Yagya Sutra (the sacred thread worn during the performance of fire sacrifices, especially the symbolic one as narrated in verse no. 16), who employs the Pranav Mantra (i.e. the OM Mantra) for his religious needs (such as when doing Japa or repetition, Yoga or meditation, Dhyana or contemplation, etc.), and who is well-versed in the principles of Brahm Yagya (spiritual practices which are equivalent to a formal fire sacrifice but done in a subtle and symbolic manner which lead directly to the realisation of the supreme cosmic Consciousness and the absolute Truth known as Brahm).

The Gods (the term is a metaphor for the virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, holiness, divinity, nobility etc.) are to be found in the diligent observance of the principles that define a man as a Brahmin. [That is, if a man is a true Brahmin as outlined above, he is deemed to be living God in the sense that he would possess all the eclectic virtues that collectively defined as being ‘godly’.]

The Hans (the enlightened Atma, the self-realised and Brahm-realised person) who adheres to the principles of Sutra (i.e. who follows the tenets that lead to Brahm-realisation, who offers his obeisance to the Supreme Being in the manner outlined in this Upanishad, who leads a life like a true Brahmin as described above) is deemed to be doing the Yagya (the fire sacrifice).

There is no difference between the Hans and Pranav. That is, there is no difference between the immaculate Atma, the pure conscious ‘self’ known as the Hans, and the supreme transcendental Brahm known as Pranav. [Brahm is the cosmic Consciousness that produces vibrations of life in the ether that are heard in the form of Naad. These dynamic vibrations in the cosmic ether produce sound that is encapsulated in the monosyllabic word OM. Hence, the OM is a sound form or the cosmic Naad known as Pranav which stands for Brahm because it is the latter which has generated this sound. If the Atma is personified as a divine Swan known as Hans, the supreme cosmic Atma known as Brahm is personified in the form of Pranav which is a cosmic sound called Pranav, and which is represented by the word OM. Refer verse no. 17 and 20 of this Canto 1 of the Pashupat Brahm Upanishad in this context.] (19).”

The Par Brahm Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse nos. 8-13 describe who *is* a true Brahmin, and verse no. 14 describes who *is not*. Now, let us examine what these verses say.

First let us see *who is not a true Brahmin*:--“Verse no. 14 = Those Brahmins who are engrossed merely in performing rituals and observing sacraments, or who are engaged in the mundane affairs of the world are Brahmins only for name’s sake (and not true Brahmins), because they live only to fill their stomachs and enjoy the fame, comforts and pleasures that come with worldly respect. Such people go to hell at the end of their lives.

[That is, they continue to take birth and die again, and during each life they undergo sufferings and miseries that are part and parcel of gross mundane existence. They do not find Mukti or spiritual liberation and deliverance, nor do they find peace and bliss that comes with self and Brahm realisation. They do not have true Gyan, and are only pretending to have it to fulfill their worldly desires. In short, they are not true Brahmins, they are imposters, and they do not do justice to the institution of Brahm-hood. They give the holy stature of being a Brahmin a bad name.

The question arises, who then is a true Brahmin? The answer is self-evident in the foregoing as well as the following verses. That is, only those who have true knowledge of Brahm, and the depth of wisdom and enlightenment to understand what the term ‘Brahm’ is all about, who do not hanker after external purity and formalities but lay stress on inner cleansing and sincerity of purpose are true Brahmins. Such people would not be much bothered about sporting a tuft on the head or wearing the sacred thread to prove that they are Brahmins, but would instead strive to inculcate the glorious virtues that are so typical of those

who have become self and Brahm realised, who have really understood the truth and reality of things.] (14).”

Now, let us see *who is a true Brahmin*:—

“verse no. 8 = A person who has understood the real and true import of the term ‘Sutra’ (literally the sacred thread as well as the formula that unfolds the path of Brahm-realisation) is the one who is eligible to attain Moksha (spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation), is a true Bhikshuk (a monk, a mendicant or a friar), is truly a Vedagya (one who is an expert in the Vedas and their tenets), is Sadachari (one who follows the path of truth and auspiciousness), and is a Vipra (a Brahmin; a learned and elderly man).

Such a man is not only holy himself but also makes those with whom he comes in contact holy and pure (8).

“verse no. 9 = The supreme transcendental Brahm who is the thread that has knitted together all the units of creation and holds them in place like beads in a rosary or a garland, the ascetic who wears this sacred thread (i.e. who accepts Brahm as the basic essence of creation and honours Brahm exclusively) is indeed said to be an expert ascetic who is well-versed in the philosophy of Yoga (9).

“verse no. 10 = A Brahmin, an expert ascetic who is well-versed in Yoga, and a person who is wise, learned and enlightened should abandon the external sacred thread, because the real thread that bestows spiritual liberation and deliverance is not the external thread made of a gross material (e.g. cotton thread or silk thread) but the symbolic sacred thread representing Brahm that is worn (accepted) internally.

When the sacred thread representing Brahm is symbolically worn internally, there is no fear of it ever getting defiled or polluted; it would permanently be holy and pure (10).

“verse no. 11 = Those who wear the sacred thread after fully understanding its metaphysical importance and spiritual significance, those who have realised that this sacred thread represents Brahm in its entirety are the ones who wear it in the true sense, and therefore are eligible for the benefits that accrue by wearing it. [For the rest, it is merely a formality that can fool the world into believing that the wearer is a holy man, and nothing more. It would not serve them any real purpose except worldly praise.] (11).

“verse no. 12 = Those who wear the Shikha and the Sutra as symbols of Gyan (truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment which kindles spiritual awakening and truth-realisation) regard Gyan as the best thing in this world to acquire and aim for. This is because Gyan is the holiest and the purest thing in this world. [It shows the correct path to the aspirant, and never misleads him for some vested self-interest.] (12).

“verse no. 13 = Those who are wise and enlightened assert that those persons who understand that the Shikha (tuft of hair on the head) is as powerful and potent as the fire element itself are the ones who are true wearers of it. For the rest, they are merely sporting a crop of hair on the head, and nothing more (13).”

These four classes of the human race were created from the single father, the Viraat or Brahma. Their origins are indicative of the different jobs that they were assigned so as to enable the creator perform the task of governance just like a king assigns separate jobs to his different ministers. But it must be clearly understood here that each class of the human race was like a part of the body of the Supreme Being, and even as a man feels disfigured and handicapped as well as feels the pain equally if his leg is cut off from the rest of his body as he feels when his arm or head is severed, the Lord feels betrayed and hurt when even one of his sons is subjected to humiliation and pain. The four classes had specific jobs cut for them so that the society could function smoothly.

The Brahmins have their origin from the mouth of Brahma the creator. Since the mouth is used to give advice and teach others, the primary job of the Brahmins was to act as

moral guide to their brethrens. The four Vedas, which are repository of all knowledge that exist, were also created from the mouth of Brahma; hence these Brahmins were considered most wise and learned. The arms are metaphors for strength and powers; they are used to protect and help others. Hence, the Kshatriyas, who were created from the arms of Brahma, were those sons of his who would give the needed protection and security to their other brethrens. In order to feed his creation, Brahma had to toil and labour to provide for the maintenance and financial and material well being of the society for merely teaching and protecting would not suffice without some one to take care of the other necessities of life. So he created the Vaishyas from his thighs, symbolising labour, to pick up the mantle of mundane affairs of life. But there must be someone who would do the daily chores, such as tilling the fields, doing the harvesting, washing and cleaning, and all other such odd jobs. This was assigned to the Shudras created from Brahma's feet symbolising service.

Paingalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse no. 7 and Canto 2, verse nos. 3 describe how the three basic Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama were used by the supreme Brahm to create different types of creatures in this creation. In the context of human beings, it would translate into the four groups into which the society was classified to indicate variations in the level of their general mental, intellectual and emotional development, their thought processes, temperaments, behaviours and bearings. Brahm stands for 'truth and enlightenment', and intelligent thinking as opposed to emotional and impulsive behaviour. All living beings that came into existence have 'conscious life' in them in as much as they show some or the other sign that are characteristics of life in its myriad forms. But all forms of life cannot be treated as exalted and highly evolved because they lack the divine and eclectic virtues of having wisdom, erudition, sagacity and knowledge that enables them to think intelligently, rationally, logically and analytically; all forms of creatures cannot discriminate between what is spiritually acceptable and what is not, they cannot decide for themselves the path to choose which would help them break the cycle of birth and death. This privilege is the exclusive domain of the human being. That is why humans are placed at the top rung of the evolutionary ladder. This is also why it is said that the Viraat Purush had revealed himself in his image of the human body, that the human body is a replica of the Viraat Purush. Now if this is the case, then only those amongst the humans who possess the highest and noblest virtues of wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, intelligence and the ability to discriminate between the bad and the good on the one hand, and the grand virtues of having compassion, love, kindness and mercy, of having total devotion, faith and dedication towards the Truth and following this Truth with whole hearted diligence, of sincerely endeavouring to break free from the shackle of ignorance and delusions that had been trapping their soul for generations after generations on the other hand, can be truthfully and honestly called manifestations of Brahm, or an image of the Viraat Purush. Brahm has revealed himself in all the creatures of this creation, but what sets the humans apart from the rest of the creatures is the possession of the grand and magnificent virtues of Brahm in their best of forms, in the best of their vibrancy, vigour and colour. The human being depicts the powers, potentials and authority of the supreme Lord in all its majestic and grandiose form, and that is why the human being has been able to rule over the rest of the creation as its unquestioned master and lord.

This brings us to an interesting conclusion—if the human being is not able to display any of these noble, virtuous and divine qualities that he has inherited from Brahm as his image then there would be no difference between this human and the other creatures who are lower down in the evolutionary ladder. This is also why amongst the humans the Brahmins are regarded as the closest representatives of Brahm because they are deemed to possess the eclectic and holy virtues of Brahm in the highest ratio as compared to their other brethrens. They have all the three Gunas in them, but the ratio of Sata Guna in them is higher than other two Gunas, making them as exalted, revered and honourable as Brahm. It does not imply that others are not images of Brahm, for there is nothing in creation that is not Brahm, but it is just that the degree and proportion of virtuous qualities that are hallmarks of Brahm are present in a greater proportion in Brahmins than other classes in society. All the creatures have their own individual place in creation, but even as all the subjects of a kingdom have their duties

and position clearly marked out in order to maintain order and hierarchy, and all of them cannot claim to be called a 'king' and they cannot enjoy the same privileges as enjoyed by the king, all the other classes of the human race as well as the rest of the creatures cannot be treated alike.

Further, all creature have the three basic Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama in varying ratios, thereby establishing their relationship with Brahm, because the off spring acquires the genes of the parent. When all the three Gunas were present in equal proportion in Brahm, he was neutral, detached and did not depict any attributes as all the three Gunas cancelled each other out. The nearest analogy to visualise this is the ordinary sunlight—there are seven colours in it, but they cancel each other in such a way that we cannot discern them in their distinctive individual forms, but what we see is the colourless dazzling light of the sun. This divine and pious form of Brahm is revealed in the renunciate ascetics, hermits, monks, friars, sages and seers, and other enlightened and self-realised persons who are regarded even higher than the Brahmins because they depict the best of virtues of Brahm, and that is also why they are called 'Brahm personified'. They represent Brahm's best form in existence. But with the polarization of Brahm's Gunas, the myriad creation and its inhabitant creatures came into being, each very different from the other and depicting Brahm's various Gunas in varying stages of polarization.

None of these classes were meant to be inferior or superior to one another; they were all parts of the body of the same Brahma. In fact, the leg bears the burden of the body; just imagine what would have happened if Brahma had not created anyone from his legs? How would the Brahmin walk, how would the Kshatriya fight, and how would the Vaishya do his commercial activities if he could not walk? Similar arguments can be applied to other classes. See also Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 1/4/11-15 which describes their origin in graphic details, and also Aetereyo-panishad, 1/1/4.

Reasons for classification—The Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 10 states the reason for the classification of the society in four classes as follows—"The skin, blood, flesh, bones and the Atma/soul have no caste, creed, colour or race. These have been conceived as a practical measure to regulate and control our day to day behaviours and interactions with each other (10).

[Note—This is an important verse which clearly states that all are equal in the eyes of the scriptures. The different classes or castes or sects or creeds or races which the society has been divided and classified into are man made and artificial. It is just for the sake of convenience of the purpose of delineation of duties and to lay down procedure and guidelines for mutual interactions and determine one's specific place in the hierarchy of existence even as we have a system of hierarchical governance in place in modern society. For example, a Brahmin was supposed to be the teacher and guide for the rest of the society, and the Kshatriya was supposed to give protection to it, while its finances and material needs were looked after by the Vaishya, and it was manually served by the Shudra. This delegation of duties and responsibilities demanded that each person belonging to a particular class should adhere to the laws and regulations meant for that particular class to ensure uninterrupted carrying out of duties and prevention of friction and overlapping of functions causing unnecessary tension and duplicity. This segregation was therefore meant to make life regulated and easy, and not to say that one man was in anyway superior to another in terms of his essential being as a human and a living creature. This is because the Atma or soul, which is pure and conscious, is one in all the creatures, whether he is a man or a woman, a Brahmin or a Shudra. Further, other components of the body, such as the skin, blood etc., are obviously the same in all humans, and if taken in their fundamental and essential form they are the same in all living creatures, whether they are humans or animals. For example, blood when analysed in a chemical laboratory will show the same principal constituents whether it is taken from a Brahmin or from a Kshatriya; blood's constituents would remain the same for all segments of society. Similarly, skin and other parts of the body have no basic difference. The visible and other apparent differences that appear in different forms of life which are

fundamentally the same is also supported by the Upanishads when they say that the Atma assumes different forms depending upon its past deeds and their accumulated effects, but the essential form of this Atma remains the same nevertheless. When we talk of 'life' we mean the entire living kingdom consisting of the plants and the animals, including the humans. This is the holistic view of the Upanishads.]

Origin of the four Varnas—The Param Hans Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 1 says that Brahma the creator had learned about the four Varnas and the laws governing them from his father Lord Adi Narayan, i.e. from Lord Vishnu in his primary form as Lord Viraat Purush from whose navel Brahma was born atop a divine lotus that emerged from it.

The Subalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse 6, and Canto 2, verse 1 describes the origin of these four classes in society. Let us see what it has to say on the subject.

“Verse no. 6, Canto 1—From this Brahma, the creator, emerged the rest of the creation as follows:--From his mouth came into being the Brahmins; from his arms were created the Kshatriyas; from his thighs evolved the Vaishyas; and from his legs were created the Shudras. From his Mana (mind) came into being the Moon; from his eyes evolved the Sun; from the ears arose the external wind (present in the entire cosmos) as well as the Pran (the vital wind in the form of breath that sustains life, as also the other vital winds that control other functions of the body of a creature); and finally from his heart sprouted the rest of creation [6].

{Note—(1) These four classes of the human race were created from the single father, the Viraat or Brahma. Their origins are indicative of the different jobs that they were assigned so as to enable the creator perform the task of governance efficiently just like a king assigns separate jobs to his different ministers. But it must be clearly understood here that each class of the human race was like a part of the body of the Supreme Being, and even as a man feels disfigured and handicapped and equal intensity of pain if his leg is cut off from the rest of his body as he feels when his arm or head is severed, the Lord feels betrayed and hurt when even one of his sons is subjected to humiliation and pain. All are equal in his eyes. The four classes had specific jobs cut out for them so that the society could function smoothly.

Mouth is used to advice and teach; hence the primary job of the Brahmins was to act as moral guide to their brethren. The four Vedas, which are repository of all knowledge that exists, were also created from the mouth of Brahma; hence these Brahmins were considered most wise and learned because they represented the knowledge and wisdom contained in the Vedas. The arms are metaphors for strength and powers; they are used to protect and help others. Hence, the Kshatriyas were those sons of Brahma who would do the needed by affording protection to their other brethren. In order to feed his creation, Brahma had to toil and labour; merely teaching and protecting would not suffice without some one to take care of the other necessities of life, such as production and distribution of food and generation of wealth to provide basic comforts. So he created the Vaishyas to pick up the mantle of mundane affairs of life on his behalf. But there must be someone who would do the daily chores and the service part, such as tilling the fields, doing the harvesting, washing and cleaning, and all other such odd jobs. This was assigned to the Shudras.

None of these classes were meant to be inferior or superior to one another; they were all parts of the body of the same Brahma. In fact, the leg bears the burden of the body; just imagine what would have happened if Brahma had not created anyone from his legs? How would the Brahmin walk, how would the Kshatriya fight, and how would the Vaishya do his commercial activities if he could not walk? Similar arguments can be applied to other classes. See also Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 1/4/11-13, and Aitereyo-panishad, 1/1/4.

(2) The moon stands for emotions and sentiments of a creature, hence its origin in the Mana which is the epicenter of all emotive thoughts. The sun shows light to the world, hence its symbolic origin in the eye of the creator. The ears hear sound from all the directions, and sound has its origin in waves which travel in space through the medium of the ether, because sound cannot be either heard or can reach any place without any medium. This medium was

called the wind, and since the ears make the presence of sound evident, the wind or air has its origin in the ears of Brahma. These ears are physically shaped like a radar or satellite dish antenna because they not only transmit sound waves but also receive them. They are like a 2-way radio receiver. And of course, the world has any relevance and importance if only the heart loves it and wishes to be enamoured with it. Once the heart starts to loathe it, or becomes dispassionate towards it, the world becomes irrelevant; therefore the world becomes non-existent as far as the creature is concerned. }

“Verse no. 1, Canto 2—From the creator’s Apaana wind (the vital wind which is inhaled and moves down in the body, thereby helping in digestion and excretory functions) was created the ‘Nishad’ community (the boatmen and elephant tamers), the ‘Yakshas’ (a type of demi-God who guards the treasure of the Gods), the ‘Rakshas’ (the ones with evil, pervert, sinful and demonic tendencies), and the ‘Gandharvas’ (celestial musicians; those junior Gods who were lower in the hierarchy of heavenly Gods).

From the bones of the creator were formed the mountains; from his body hairs came into being the members of the botanical kingdom, the various plants and vegetations, including the medicinal herbs; and from his forehead creased with anger evolved the God of wrath, or ‘Rudra’ [1].

{Note—(1) The Nishad community was considered lower than the Shudras. In practical terms this refers to the fact that these people stayed outside the villages and cities, and had little interaction with those people who were regarded as more educated and cultured. The fishermen and others who took care of animals, such as horses, elephants etc. also belonged to this group. The Yaksha was the guard of the God’s treasury; here they were assigned the job of protecting the assets that would be generated by the other classes in social hierarchy. The society had all types of people; some of them were wicked and evil. They were the Rakshas. And the Gandharva was a soul who had aspired to be as exalted as a God but somewhere went astray from his path and became a junior God. All these designations imply that the creation created by the creator had all shades of creatures in it, and all of them were his sons because all were formed from a part of his body.

(2) Obviously Brahma got annoyed when his sons started bickering among themselves. So he got angry, and his forehead creased in annoyance. This metamorphosed into Rudra. The word Rudra means anger, wrath, vehemence etc. This Rudra was the God of tempest and destruction. He is also identified with Kaal or time and death, because Rudra sparked annihilation when the opportune time for destruction came. The terrible shaft of Rudra brings death and disease to cattle and man, just like plague/pestilence mentioned in the Holy Bible.}”

Colour of the skin—It ought to be noted here that the genesis of creation as outlined by the Upanishads describe the colour of the skin of the creatures that came into being. The colour of the skin was used symbolically to indicate the dominance of one or the other of the three basic Gunas, the Sata, the Raja and the Tama, in a particular individual that determines to which class of society he belongs, and which formed the basis of this classification which depend heavily on the quality displayed by an individual to become eligible to belong to one or the other class. The Gunas displayed by him holds a greater importance than his mere birth in a particular section.

For example, in Mantriko-panishad, verse no. 5 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition it is said that Maya, which has created this entire world by its delusion creating powers, has the following three colours—white (fair; grey; all the light shades), dark (brown, black, yellowish and all shades of colours that are not essentially white) and blood red (or copper colour). Since the offspring gets the colour of the skin of the parent because the colour often is indicative of the race to which a particular species belongs, there would therefore be creatures having these three basic colours in varying hues and shades. Now what is the significance of these three colours? These *three colours* represent the three basic qualities, called Gunas, present in all the creatures. Even as an offspring gets the colour of the skin of the race to which it belongs, the inherent characters of all creatures are inherited from their mother, and

this mother is Maya. The white colour stands for the best category of qualities called Sata Guna, the red colour stands for the second and medium quality called Raja, and the dark colour stands for the meanest quality called Tama. The word Tam itself means 'dark' and it stands for the worst type of qualities leading to sinful and pervert nature in a man which makes his life hellish; the word 'red' is a metaphor for anger, vehemence, vengeance, agitations, restlessness, short temper, strife, hatred, envy, jealousy and the other such negative worldly characteristics in a person; the colour 'white' stands for peace, tranquility, prosperity, happiness and wisdom, all of which are the characters of noble and gentlemanly persons. Refer also Shewata-shwatar Upanishad, Canto 4, verse 4-5; Paingalo-panishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3; Mantriko-panishad, verse no. 5 in this context.]

एहि कर फल पुनि बिषय बिरागा । तब मम धर्म उपज अनुरागा ॥ ७ ॥

ēhi kara phala puni biṣaya birāgā. taba mama dharma upaja anurāgā. 7.

The eclectic reward or fruit of this effort (i.e. having company of saints and leading a life according to the tenets of the Vedas or scriptures) is that one develops a deep and sincere sense of Vairagya from this world and the temptations of its material sense objects. The spiritual aspirant develops aversion to the world and its temptations for pleasures of the senses (because he understands that they will trap him in an endless cycle of miseries and torments from which he will find difficult to extricate himself later on).

[That is, by remaining in the company of saints and study of scriptures to learn how one should lead a life that is considered good, one becomes aware of many things in life that he would have missed otherwise. For instance he begins to realise that true happiness and bliss comes not from pursuing the material objects of the world or appeasing the sense organs of the body but by seeking it inside his own self in the Atma that is a fountainhead of eternal bliss, peace and happiness, the Atma that is pure and un-adulterated consciousness as compared to the world and its sense objects that are gross and inane.

With the dawn of wisdom and realisation of the spiritual truth, one develops true renunciation, detachment and dispassion from all material sense objects of the world as well as the urge for self-gratification that arises from the sense organs. One begins to see that the world and its objects can never give true happiness and bliss. Whatever illusion of happiness and comfort that is created by this world to lure the creature towards it are like the bait shown to the fish to catch the latter. Besides this, since the world is imaginary and transient, all its charms and objects are also imaginary and transient. A wise man realises that none of such things that are temporary themselves can ever give him a fruit or reward that is long-lasting and real.]

When this happens, i.e. when Vairagya develops and takes a firm root in an aspirant's inner-self, the spiritual aspirant develops affection and a desire to follow the path leading to 'me'—i.e. the path leading to the Supreme Being, the path of one's liberation and deliverance from this world and all its tentacles, a path that would provide the aspirant his desired goal of emancipation and salvation, a path that would help him steer clear of all the pitfalls that come in his way to freedom, a path that is lit with the light of wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation that removes all forms of darkness symbolizing ignorance, a path that lifts his Spirit from the gross and

temporal plane to the plane that has an ethereal, sublime and subtle dimension. This is known as the path to God-hood.

[By developing Vairagya, one distances himself from the artificial world and its equally artificial pleasures, and instead seeks happiness and bliss that is true and eternal by turning himself to the Lord who symbolizes or personifies the grand virtue of eternal bliss, happiness and peace that the spiritual aspirant so much longs to attain.] (7)

[Note—When one follows the path shown by saints and scriptures, it is natural that his conduct and thoughts will be cleansed of all worldly taints and corruptions. Once he tastes the nectar of true contentedness, happiness and peace that comes by following a life of auspiciousness and righteousness as opposed to remaining engrossed in the pursuit of this selfish world and its cunning sense objects that act like the bait to catch the fish, he will voluntarily distance himself from the latter and turn towards the former.

‘Vairagya’ does not mean one must run away from the world and shirk his responsibilities. True Vairagya means one must not be attached or hooked to, or affected by any of the things of this world, or by the results of his deeds and actions in this world. Vairagya comes from within and not from without. Say, if the mind and heart are attracted towards the charms of the world and one forces himself to run away to the forest in the guise of a hermit, will such act serve any purpose except to increase his yearning and lust for the world instead of eliminating them? Forced Vairagya serves no purpose as it only stokes desires, greed, lust and passions further. It enhances his cravings instead of dousing them. The benefit from Vairagya comes only when it sprouts from within, when it is sincere, and when it is centered round wisdom and realisation of the truth and reality.

For instance, when one wishes to rise in life by being educated and acquiring skills, he will leave no stone unturned to acquire the best education that is available to him and be diligent and steadfast in his studies. Even if such a sincere student may not have the wherewithal for studying in a reputed college, he will still shine in life. On the contrary, if someone is forced into school or college by his parents or family or peer pressure though he has no earnest desire to study and acquire education and skills, then his learning and education will be mediocre at the best. He will spend his time in a fidgety manner, frittering it away and not deriving any worthwhile benefit from the opportunity that he has got to study in a good college.

Again, when one is really hungry he will enjoy food, no matter how bland it is, and this food is properly absorbed by the body as it is properly digested due to secretion of saliva and digested juices. On the other hand, if one eats even delicious things without having real appetite then this food will harm his body more than doing it any good. So likewise, if one has developed Vairagya in a sincere manner, out of realisation of the truth, then it will be steady and robust. Otherwise it will only create more problems for him.

The way leading to the Lord is very easy if one has developed Vairagya because then whatever one does is not done to serve one’s own self interest but to serve the Lord God. All such deeds and their results are offered to the Lord, and the sense of contentedness and fulfillment is of an ethereal dimension because now the objective is to serve the Supreme Being who is a provider of eternal peace, happiness and bliss instead of serving the gross body and its equally gross organs that are selfish and like a bowl of miseries and pain. A devotee of the Lord realises that the Supreme Being is a universal entity, that whatever is created in this world is one or the other form of the same divine Being, so he develops a sense of profound equanimity and equality in his approach to the world. He finds himself humbled by this realisation, and all his sense of pride and arrogance vanish. His approach and outlook in the world undergoes transformation, from being gross and selfish to being sublime and magnanimous.

The combined effect of all such spiritual endeavours is the upliftment of the soul of the aspirant.]

श्रवणादिक नव भक्ति दृढ़ाहीं । मम लीला रति अति मन माहीं ॥ ८ ॥

śravanādika nava bhakti dṛṛhāhīm. mama līlā rati ati mana māhīm. 8.

The cumulative auspicious effect of the aforesaid positive way of living a life dedicated to me (i.e. the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram) is that the aspirant develops keen interest in practicing the nine forms of Bhakti, such as hearing my divine stories, divine deeds, divine glories and divine name. [This half of the verse can be interpreted as follows also—“The next step, i.e. the third step, towards developing Bhakti and making it firm, steady and robust is to follow its nine steps, one of which is to hear about my divine stories, divine deeds, divine glories and divine name.”]¹

This will strengthen one’s faith in me; he will have true affection for me. His ‘Mana’ (heart and mind) would develop a longing for my divine stories and divine deeds and their accompanying divine glories. [The second half of this verse can be interpreted as follows also—“The next step, i.e. the fourth step, towards having steady and firm Bhakti in me is to have great internal affection for me, as well as a sincere longing to hear about my divine stories and deeds. This desire must come from within, i.e. it must sprout in one’s hear and mind.”]² (8)

[Note—¹There are said to be *nine steps to Bhakti*. It is called ‘Navadha Bhakti’. ‘Navdha’ = nine fold; ‘Bhakti’ = devotion, dedication, submission, faith and love for the Lord God, or anyone else who is spiritually exalted, wise, enlightened, holy, pious and divine, such as for example one’s moral preceptor and guide, great saints and sages etc.

Lord Ram has himself preached about them to Sabari in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35, to Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 36. We will read about them later on in this book when we come to these verses.

The aforesaid way of auspicious life is living in the company of saints and wise people, respecting elders who are wise and enlightened, living a life righteously according to the sanction of the scriptures, and developing a deep sense of renunciation from the deluding world and its material sense objects that trap the creature in a whirlpool of miseries, grief and torments. Obviously this is possible only in the community of saints where the singing of the Lord’s glories is a routine affair. In this community one does not hear talk of worldly things, but only about the Lord and his magnificent deeds, divine glories and holy name. The sense of profound internal peace and bliss that is obtained in hearing about the Lord and his divine glories is so immense and soothing that the aspirant forgets about the world and its false charms in which he had sought the same peace and bliss earlier. When he begins to taste the sublime nectar of real peace and happiness which comes by hearing about the Lord, about his divine glories and holy name, and when the aspirant takes a dip in the pristine water represented by them, he attains ecstasy and thrill like the one he had never ever experienced while remaining submerged or engrossed in the affairs of the gross world. The world and its stories only gave him more worries, but the stories of the Lord dispelled such worries; the sounds of the world fuelled his desires and fears, but those pertaining to the Lord filled him with ecstasy and exhilaration.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 128, sage Valmiki also reiterates this virtue of listening attentively the divine stories and glories of the Lord so much so that the listener is never satisfied or contented by hearing them. He wants to listen more and more of them. His ears are like the vast ocean that never gets filled by the countless rivers symbolizing the Lord’s divine glories and stories that continuously pour in it.

²One must not hear my stories to impress upon the world that he is a pious sort of person, or just to while away the time, or for purposes of entertainment, or to escape the drudgery of routine life and its affairs, or for anything else that smacks of pretensions, deceit and falsehood. The desire to hear about my divine and holy name, deeds, stories and glories must come sincerely from the heart, because it is only then that the mind and the sub-conscious will be focused on them. Otherwise there will be a lot of worldly distraction—i.e. though the person may sit through the narration of the story but his mind will be occupied elsewhere in the world. If this happens, then it is a sheer waste of time.

When one hears about the Lord and his divine stories from wise men who speak only the truth and explain the reality in understandable terms, when he sees for himself how happy, contented and blissful such men are, when he hears from them about the futility of pursuing the world and the great spiritual reward obtained by developing Bhakti for the Lord as a means of attaining eternal and robust peace and bliss on the one hand, and liberation and deliverance from the world of miseries and torments on the other hand, the hearer is motivated to hear more of it and test the teachings of these wise men for their practical implications. In a short while he realises the truth in what he hears, and comparing his experience with the world where he was constantly surrounded by horrifying worries and nagged by insurmountable problems with this world of profound bliss and happiness, he decides that it is Bhakti that will serve his interests best, it is Bhakti that will make his life fulfilled and contented and happy, it is Bhakti that can lead him to his objective of obtaining steady peace and eternal bliss in the easiest way, it is Bhakti that can provide him liberation and deliverance from the cycle of spiritual problems most conveniently.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 128, sage Valmiki reiterates this virtue whereby the devotee remains immersed in the thoughts of Lord Ram. He has great love and longing to hear about the Lord and his glorious deeds, his divine stories and his divine form.]

संत चरन पंकज अति प्रेमा । मन क्रम बचन भजन दृढ़ नेमा ॥ ९ ॥

santa carana pañkaja ati prēmā. mana krama bacana bhajana dṛṛha nēmā. 9.

The next step (the fifth one) is to have affection and respect for the lotus-like holy feet of saints and pious people, and be devoted to them.¹

The next step of Bhakti (i.e. sixth) is to adore the Lord and have unflinching devotion for him by employing all his faculties—such as his Mana (mind and heart), his Karma (deeds) and his Bachan (words, speech). Besides these, he must be steady in his Niyam (spiritual practices such as repeating the Lord's holy name, listening to the Lord's divine glories, regular worship and meditation on the Lord, as well as in general way living a life as prescribed by the scriptures).² (9)

[Note—¹This is the fifth step for obtaining Bhakti. The 'lotus flower' is highly respected in the scriptures as a metaphor for the virtues of purity and cleanliness. This is because its petals are always clean inspite of the dirt and filth in the surrounding water of the pond where the lotus grows. A person who manages to remain aloof from the world and its delusions, corruptions and taints is compared to the lotus. The foot is that part of the body that is in constant touch with the ground, and it the part that becomes dirty first. The foot remaining clean inspite of it being in constant contact with dirt all around is a metaphoric way of saying that the concerned person is unaffected by the surrounding taints and impurities of the world. This is why this metaphor is used for the saints—because they live an ordinary life like the rest of the human race, but they manage to remain pure, holy and cleansed internally. None of the delusions and temptations of this material world ever affects their inner self. They remain engrossed in the thoughts of the Lord, submerged in the bliss and ecstasy that comes with

realisation of the spiritual truth, and are perpetually in a state of meditation that enables them to live in a transcendental state of consciousness though externally they go about their routine life and affairs like ordinary people.

Another reason for comparing saints with a lotus is that just like the lotus flower that provides the nectar to the bee which comes to the flower seeking for it, these saints provide the nectar of spirituality and the ambrosia of eternal bliss and happiness represented by Lord Ram's divine stories, name, glories etc. to all those devotees who come to them in search for it. Just like a number of bees hum around a lotus that is ripe with nectar, these devotees flock to the saints in their quest of Lord Ram's Bhakti.

To be 'devoted' to saints is to faithfully serve them and follow their instructions. After all, if a student does not obediently obey the instructions of his teacher then he will never learn the subject properly. The teacher on his part is always inclined to favour that student who is loyal, obedient, faithful and diligent in his studies as compared to one who creates mischief, is disobedient and shows disrespect to him. Every good teacher wishes to give the best he knows to his student because the latter is the teacher's best ambassador in the world. If the disciple rises and does good work in the world, the credit goes to the teacher. So naturally the saints would be most willing to impart the divine knowledge that the seeker wants if the latter serves them faithfully and diligently. Otherwise they will treat him as a source of nuisance and avoid him by a long barge pole. Therefore, it is in the interest of the spiritual aspirant to be devoted to the saints from whom he expects to gain insight on esoteric matters.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 129, sage Valmiki reiterates this virtue of adoring and having devotion for the holy feet of saints. Valmiki says "Lord Ram should live in the heart of those who bow reverentially and with special affection before gods, the Guru (teacher), and Brahmins (elders and learned people in the society)."

²The earnest devotee and the spiritual aspirant is prescribed this formula. (i) He must be focused on his spiritual practices, for anything done half-heartedly and with a distracted mind bears no fruit. (ii) He must do things in a righteous and proper manner, do them selflessly as a service to the Lord, and then offer all the results of such deeds to the Lord. This serves two major purposes—one, it makes him dispassionate towards the deeds and actions, and two, he does them calmly because he is not worried about their results which he is obliged to offer to the Lord. Further, since he is convinced that whatever he is doing is a service of the Lord God, all his actions and deeds automatically assume a holy nature and he does them with a pure mind and heart because it is an offering just like one offers something to a deity in a temple or any other shrine. (iii) He speaks the truth, never cheats anyone by speaking deceitfully or with vested interest in mind, is polite in his words, and is generally well spoken. His words and demeanours reflect his high mental caliber like a person of high birth and education. He gets acclaim and good friends; he fosters goodwill and brotherhood instead of hatred and ill-will. (iv) And he is diligent, steady and regular in whatever he does.

Even a cursory reading of these steps will show that they help a person to acquire the virtue of perfection, to become a noble human being. The Lord embodies all the good virtues and auspicious qualities in existence, and anyone aspiring to be near the Lord must acquire them, must develop them, must nurture them and practice them so that he does not look like an unwanted person in the company of holy people who surround the Lord. Not only this, these eclectic and divine virtues will make his life happy and joyous just like healthy life-style makes the physical body free from disease and so many other problems which in turn makes a person's life comfortable, peaceful, happy and enjoyable.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 129, sage Valmiki reiterates this virtue of worshipping, adoring and having devotion for Lord Ram. Valmiki says—"Oh Lord! He who worships you with his own hands daily, who has no other reliance or support except you, who is convinced that taking refuge in or having devotion for your holy feet is equivalent to going to a pilgrim place, who repeats your holy name which is the king of all divine names, and who worships you along with all the members of his family—verily, you should live in the heart of such a person."]

गुरु पितु मातु बंधु पति देवा । सब मोहि कहँ जानै दृढ़ सेवा ॥ १० ॥

guru pitu mātū bandhu pati dēvā. saba mōhi kaham̐ jānai dṛṛha sēvā. 10.

The next step (the seventh one) is to serve me faithfully, honestly, devotedly and diligently in the way of serving one's Guru (teacher, moral preceptor and guide), one's parents (father and mother), one's brothers (or peers, friends, companions, kith and kin), one's husband (applicable to a person's wife), and one's deity or the Lord to whom one is devoted—treating all of them as one of my forms, and therefore serving them with the conviction that it is me who is being served in their respective forms. (10)

[Note—This is in consonance with the grand philosophy of the Upanishads that teach that a truly wise, self-realised and enlightened man is he who sees the Lord in each living being. After all, the persons named in this verse have a direct bearing upon the life of a person, and they give him an opportunity to serve the Lord God in practical terms with the view that all of them are images of the same Lord.

Why, if a person says that he is wise enough to imagine the existence of the Supreme Being in lifeless stone idols by virtue of which he worships statues and icons in shrines and treating them as images of the Lord God, should he not see the same Supreme Lord in the form of a living being so close to him, a living being with flesh and blood, as a direct representative of the Lord God? Well, if he does not see the Lord in them, then truly he has no moral right to say that he worships the Lord in dead and lifeless stones and idols.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 129, sage Valmiki tells Lord Ram that he should live in the heart of a person who shows respects his Guru more than the Lord, and serves the Guru in the best possible way he can.

Again, sage Valmiki further stresses that “Oh Lord, you should live in the heart of such persons who are friendly towards all and think of the good of all”—refer; Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, the first part of Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 130.

In the same context, Valmiki says “Lord Ram should live in the heart of those who bow reverentially and with special affection before gods, the Guru (teacher), and Brahmins (elders and learned people in the society)”—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 129.]

मम गुन गावत पुलक सरीरा । गदगद गिरा नयन बह नीरा ॥ ११ ॥

mama guna gāvata pulaka sarīrā. gadagada girā nayana baha nīrā. 11.

The next step (i.e. the eighth) is to become so exhilarated and ecstatic while singing and narrating my divine glories and virtues that the body is thrilled and titillated, the voice is choked with surging emotions, and tears of love and ecstasy run down from the eyes. (11)

[Note—These are the physical signs of one being in a state of extreme happiness and ecstasy. The idea is that devotion and love for the Lord must be so deep seated and firmly established in one's inner self, one should have such longing for the love of God that as soon as he starts singing the Lord's divine story or his holy name, his body becomes overwhelmed with

happiness and joy of the highest order so much so that tears flow involuntarily from his eyes, his voice becomes choked with surging emotions, and a thrill runs down his veins.

This state is also obtained during the higher stages of Yoga when an ascetic attains Samadhi, the transcendental state of existence of consciousness where the ascetic loses awareness of the body and the surrounding world, and lives in an ethereal plane that goes beyond the mundane and the ordinary.

Therefore, this state when the devotee sings the glories of the Lord and becomes thrilled with tears flowing down his eyes and voice choked is identical to the state of transcendental existence so much lauded and applauded in the spiritual field of Yoga.

Sage Valmiki has enumerated the many virtues which a person must possess if he expects that Lord Ram lives in his inner-being. These virtues are outlined in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 128, to Doha no. 131. During this presentation, the learned sage Valmiki says—“Lord Ram should live in the heart of such a person who loves the Lord more than his own life, for whom the Lord is the dearest one in this world (Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 130)”. Naturally therefore, if one remembers someone who is extremely dear to him he is bound to be thrilled and excited.]

काम आदि मद दंभ न जाकें । तात निरंतर बस मैं ताकें ॥ १२ ॥

kāma ādi mada dambha na jākēm. tāta nirantara basa main tākēm. 12.

Oh dear! I (the Supreme Being) have my permanent abode in the Mana (heart and mind) of those persons (devotees and spiritual aspirants) who have no trace of such vices as Kaam (passions, lust, yearnings etc.), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy), and Dambha (falsehood, deceit, conceit, pretensions, wickedness, crookedness etc.).

[That is, if a man's heart and mind are free from these vices, the Lord lives close to him, in his inner-self. In other words, such persons become one like the Lord himself; they represent the Lord himself; they are as honourable and worthy of reverence as the Lord.] (12)

[Note—This is the ninth form of Bhakti or sign of having devotion for the Lord—because once a person develops or inculcates or practices these virtues he is deemed to be free from all taints and internally cleansed so much so that the Lord now finds it fit to make his residence in the inner-self or the bosom of this devotee. Since the Lord can only live where there is purity of heart and mind, such a devotee is the proper place for the Lord to reside.

In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 130 in which sage Valmiki says that “Lord Ram should live in the heart of those persons who have no trace of vices such as Kaam (passions), Krodha (anger), Mada (arrogance, hypocrisy and haughtiness), Maan (false sense of pride, ego and vanity), Moha (attractions for and infatuations with the world and its material sense objects, with the body and its organs), Lobha (greed), Kshobha (grief, sorrows, regrets, unhappiness and a sense of gloom and depression), Raag and Droha (attachments and attractions on the one hand, and animosity, ill-will and hatred on the other hand respectively), Kapat (deceit, conceit, falsehood, pretensions, wickedness, crookedness), and Maya (delusions and their attendant hallucinations and attachments with things that are false and imaginary).]

दो०. बचन कर्म मन मोरि गति भजनु करहिं निःकाम ।

तिन्ह के हृदय कमल महुँ करउँ सदा बिश्राम ॥ १६ ॥

dōhā.

bacana karma mana mōri gati bhajanu karahim̐ niḥkāma.
tinha kē hr̥daya kamala mahum̐ kara'um̐ sadā biśrāma. 16.

[This is the tenth form of Bhakti.] He who has me as his only destiny and succour, he who completely depends upon me in his words and speech, his deeds and actions, and his mind and heart, he who has deep devotion for me and who worships me selflessly—verily, I always find rest and peace while living comfortably in his lotus-like heart. (Doha no. 16)'

[Using the faculty of speech in service of Lord Ram means that one speaks the truth, speaks polite words, speak things that help others and shows them the correct way, talks only of rightful things and auspicious subjects, never talks ill of others or uses deceitful words to serve his selfish ends, uses his power to speak to honour the Lord and praise his glories, to propagate rightful knowledge and good virtues by way of teaching and enlightening others about moral values and disseminating spiritual knowledge, and so on and so forth.

Using the deeds and actions as a means to serve Lord Ram means to do them selflessly, for the general welfare of the creatures, without any emotional attachment with them or their results, and offering both the deeds and actions and their results to the Lord.

Using the Mana (mind and heart) in the service of Lord Ram is to keep them cleansed of all negative thoughts and emotions, to keep them free from the corrupting effects of worldly taints such as countless attachments, delusions, desires, greed, passions etc. which act as moral impurities and spiritual drags that impede progress of the devotee towards his chosen goal, to keep the mind and heart focused on the Lord and his divine deeds, his holy name and his magnificent glories, and to serve and honour Lord Ram most sincerely and honestly, with full involvement of the mind, the sub-conscious and the heart. The mind, the sub-conscious and the heart which form the subtle component of the body must be entirely dedicated in the service of the Lord so much so that they are able to automatically guide the grosser components of the body, i.e. the various organs of perception and action, in being righteous, noble and conscientious in whatever they do. The control of the mind and heart is extremely important as they are the controlling authorities of all the deeds and actions which the physical body is involved in. An honourable mind and heart will make the body act and do whatever it does in an honourable manner.

Practicing these eclectic virtues makes a man cleansed of all worldly flaws and impurities, and he becomes holy and pious. Then it becomes possible for Lord Ram to live in his heart. When the Lord makes his presence felt inside the aspirant's inner-self, the latter experiences a high degree of bliss, peace and happiness that becomes permanent because once the Lord begins to live in his inner-being, there is no question of worldly delusions ever influencing him again. All his fears, miseries, sorrows etc. are dispelled for good, and he begins to enjoy beatitude and felicity.] (Doha no. 16)

[Note— In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, sage Valmiki tells Lord Ram the type of devotees in whose heart the Lord should live. During this narration the sage says—(i) “he who has no other reliance or support, who completely depends upon Lord Ram (the Lord should live in his heart)—refer: Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 129; (ii) “who

believes that by taking refuge in the holy feet of Lord Ram he has gone to a pilgrim place, the Lord should live in his heart—refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 129; (iii) “a person who expects only one reward for everything he does, and it is to have love and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram—verily, the Lord should live in his heart like it were the Lord’s temple”—refer: Doha no. 129; (iv) “a person who has no destiny or succour except the Lord, Lord Ram should live in his heart”—refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 130; (v) “Oh Lord! He who loves you more than his own self, his own life, verily oh Lord, you should live in his heart as if it was your own auspicious residence”—refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 130; (vi) “for whom you (Lord Ram) is the only relation that matters, because you are his lord, friend, brother, father, mother and moral preceptor known as the Guru, verily you should live in his heart which is equivalent to your temple”—refer: Doha no. 130; (vii) “he who wants nothing ever, but has natural love, affection, faith and devotion for you, oh Lord you must always live in his heart because it is your own abode”—refer: Doha no. 131.]

{It is to be noted that Lord Ram has explicitly told Laxman in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 16 that: “I am easily influenced and mellowed by Bhakti which also grants immense joy and pleasure to my devotees. It stands by its self; it requires no other props or support; it is self-sustaining and self-sufficient. On the other hand, both Gyan (gnosis; knowledge of the true nature of God and the ‘self’ both of which are pure consciousness) and Vigyan (empirical knowledge; to be able to discern between the formed and unformed variants of the Lord God) depend upon Bhakti (in the sense that unless one is deeply interested in and devoted to his spiritual path, one would not take much trouble to acquire Gyan and have Vigyan of the Lord God as it would be too much of a bother for him)”.}

(3.3) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36:

Moving ahead on his onwards journey through the forest, Lord Ram visited the hermitage of Sabari, the old woman who had all her life longed to have a divine view of the Lord, and was awaiting his arrival most eagerly. During a conversation with her Lord Ram outlined the nine-fold path or the nine ways by which Bhakti can be practiced by any spiritual aspirant. It will be noted that all these ways are very simple to implement. It ought to be noted now in the context of the Lord’s preaching of the nine forms of Bhakti to Sabari that they all have one common factor or denominator running through them—and it is to have unadulterated, faithful and honest devotion, dedication, surrender and affection for the Lord God, to have exemplary auspicious and righteous virtues, to be free from all worldly attachments and delusions, and to have complete faith and reliance upon Lord Ram for all of one’s needs and spiritual welfare.

कह रघुपति सुनु भामिनि बाता । मानउँ एक भगति कर नाता ॥ ४ ॥

kaha raghupati sunu bhāmini bātā. māna'um'ēka bhagati kara nātā. 4.

Lord Raghupati (literally, the Lord of the Raghu dynasty of the kingdom of Ayodhya; i.e. Lord Ram) said to Sabari—‘Listen, good lady! I recognize and respect only one form of relationship—and it is known as ‘Bhakti’. (4)

[Note—The word ‘Bhakti’ covers such auspicious and glorious virtues as having true and sincere devotion, dedication, affection, love, surrender, submission, faith and belief in Lord God. Lord Ram is an incarnation of the Supreme Being, and therefore the nine forms of Bhakti which he enumerates here serve as a guide for any spiritual aspirant who wishes to attain the Supreme Being.

The term ‘Bhakti’ has been extensively explained in different contexts as notes appended to different verses of Lord Ram’s discourse for Laxman that is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17.

Then again, in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 79 of Uttar Kand of Ram Charit Manas, it is said that “the miseries and torments from which the creatures suffer cannot be eliminated without having devotion for Lord Hari”.

Bhakti is the only thing that pleases the Lord, and if a person has this virtue in him then it does not matter if he lacks everything else in this world as far as the Lord being pleased and benevolent upon him is concerned. No amount of pretensions and pampering will please the Lord if the creature does not have the divine virtue of Bhakti in him. It is the only virtue, quality and character that endear a seeker of liberation and deliverance to the Supreme Lord. It is the only thing that the Lord seeks in a person in order to accept the latter in the fold of his close associates.]

जाति पाँति कुल धर्म बड़ाई । धन बल परिजन गुन चतुराई ॥ ५ ॥

भगति हीन नर सोहड़ कैसा । बिनु जल बारिद देखिअ जैसा ॥ ६ ॥

jāti pām̐ti kula dharma barā'ī. dhana bala parijana guna caturā'ī. 5.
bhagati hīna nara sōha'i kaisā. binu jala bārīda dēkhi'a jaisā. 6.

High caste, family lineage, diligence following of the laws of Dharma (righteousness, propriety and noble conduct), good reputation and all sorts of respect, honour and acclaim that one has in this world, possession or acquisition of material wealth and prosperity, physical strength, force, authority and powers, having a large family and circle of friends and followers, possessing countless skills, qualities and virtues, as well as possession of wisdom and intelligence—none of them matters at all and has any value for a man if he has no Bhakti in him, for if he lacks Bhakti then he appears like a cloud that has no rain in it. (5-6)

[Note—A cloud is of any worth only if it gives rain to the world, otherwise it is just a useless entity floating aimlessly in the sky. Rain-bearing clouds are welcomed by all the living beings, and though they are dark in colour, make threatening noises by rumbling and thundering, and often strike the world with the killing staff of lightening that instantly burns anything on earth where it lands, the people still honour the rain-bearing cloud, sing and dance in ecstasy when they first appear on the horizon after the scorching heat of summer, and celebrate their arrival. Even mother Nature smiles at the arrival of the rain-bearing clouds, with withered plants looking up in hope of survival, the dry and parched land preparing to look dressed up in verdant greenery like a newly decorated bride, the birds such as the peacock dancing to welcome the cloud with open plumes, and the Chatak bird (the cuckoo) feeling exhilarated and singing in merriment that at last it will be able to quench its thirst.

But dry rain-less cloud keep floating away in endless streams across the sky, and no body bothers about them.

Similarly, the world is full of countless living beings, having as many countless virtues, some small and others of a grand scale. They may all excel in their respective fields in the mundane world, to a lesser or a greater degree—and the Lord treats them all alike because all of them are his children.

But amongst these teeming millions and trillions of creatures there are those handful of them who have Bhakti for the Lord. Just as a father who treats his many sons who are all well established in life equally, but having a special soft corner for a son who is completely devoted to the father, loving him and diligently caring for his needs inspite of the fact that this particular son may not have done so well in terms of success in the world, Lord Ram too has a soft corner for a person who has the virtue of ‘Bhakti’ in him inspite of the fact that he may not been fortunate to take birth in a high family, have material prosperity, possess any skills and intelligence, or in any other way can be regarded as a successful man by worldly yardsticks. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 87 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 78 (a) says “a person who wishes to attain emancipation and salvation without having the virtue of Bhakti firmly engrained in him is as anomalous as an animal which has no tail or horns on its body inspite of such a person being otherwise highly learned, erudite, wise and skilled”.]

नवधा भगति कहउँ तोहि पाहीं । सावधान सुनु धरु मन माहीं ॥ ७ ॥

navadhā bhagati kaha'um' tōhi pāhīm. sāvadhāna sunu dharu mana māhīm. 7.

Now I (Lord Ram) shall narrate to you the nine forms of Bhakti. Listen carefully and establish them firmly (cherish them) in your mind and heart. (7)

प्रथम भगति संतन्ह कर संगी । दूसरि रति मम कथा प्रसंगी ॥ ८ ॥

prathama bhagati santanha kara saṅgā. dūsari rati mama kathā prasaṅgā. 8.

The first form of Bhakti is having contact with saints, holy people and those who are pious, establishing a communion with them and obtaining their fellowship.

The second is to have a deep liking for and eagerness to hear divine stories and episodes related to my life and deeds. (8)

[Note—We have the same prescription that is also given by sage Valmiki, as well as by Lord Ram to Laxman, his younger brother.

The first component of Bhakti is ‘having communion with saints and holy people’. This component is also reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas—first by sage Valmiki in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 129; and then by Lord Ram himself in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 16.

The second component of ‘having a deep sense of affection and liking for hearing Lord Ram’s divine stories’ is also reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas—first by sage Valmiki in Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 128 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-5; and then by Lord Ram himself in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8, 11 that precede Doha no. 16.]

दो०. गुर पद पंकज सेवा तीसरि भगति अमान ।

चौथि भगति मम गुन गन करइ कपट तजि गान ॥ ३५ ॥

dōhā.

gura pada pañkaja sēvā tīsari bhagati amāna.
cauthi bhagati mama guna gana kara'i kapaṭa taji gāna. 35.

The third form of Bhakti is to humbly serve the holy lotus-like feet of one's Guru (moral preceptor and spiritual teacher), and not having any sense of pride at having done so.

[To wit, one must not go about boasting that the Guru favours him and has allowed the person to serve him. This service should be selfless and done with dedication. One must not serve the Guru just to extract knowledge from him, treating this service as a means to please the Guru so that he will reveal the secrets to the disciple, but done as a matter of showing gratitude and respect to a person who has not only shown the ignorant aspirant the correct path to his desired goal but also stand by him to prevent him from falling in the countless pits that come in the way, guiding him along and coming to his aide when he needs help the most. Betrayal of trust of such a teacher, guide and help is the biggest inhuman act a person can ever imagine to perform, and a sin that would be unpardonable. But one must not be boastful of this service or do it with selfish aim only. It must be voluntary and not forced against one's wish. This service to the Guru must therefore be genuine, selfless, diligent, sincere and arising from the heart. One must not feel that he is obliging the Guru with his service, but rather feel honoured that he is lucky to have got an opportunity to serve him. A worthy disciple is one who feels privileged that the Guru was gracious enough to let him serve the latter, and that this is the minimum he can do to repay the debt that he owes to the Guru, because it is he, the Guru, who has removed the darkness of ignorance from his life and illuminated his path with the light of knowledge.]¹

The fourth form is to sing and emotionally submerge one's self in the narration and thoughts of my divine glories and virtues without any trace of pretensions, deceit, conceit, wickedness or crookedness. [For instance, one must not attend discourses and narration of the Lord's divine stories just to pass time or with the intention to tell the world that one is a religious and pious person so that the world begins to trust him. Then this pretentious and deceitful person exploits this trust to serve his vested interests and fulfill his worldly passions and desires. This sort of hearing of the Lord's story serves no good at all; rather it pulls the man down in the bog of deceit and falsehood which he is supposed to rise from in the first place when he went to attend the discourse about the Lord.] (Doha no. 35)

[Note—The third component of 'humbly serving the Guru' is also reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas—by sage Valmiki in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, 8 that precedes Doha no. 129; and earlier by Tulsidas himself in Baal Kand, from stanza no. 5 of the first 'Sortha' (a sort of verse) with which the book Ram Charit Manas opens, and then from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1, till Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2.

The fourth component of Bhakti is 'to sing and narrate Lord Ram's divine stories and glories without any pretensions, cunning and deceit'. This component is also reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas—by Lord Ram himself in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 16 while the Lord was preaching Laxman about Bhakti.

¹Now let us read more about a *Guru*, what are his qualities that are so much eulogized in the scriptures, and why he is given so much importance. Even Tulsidas has praised a Guru in laudatory terms as mentioned above.

The importance of a Guru has been emphasized in a number of Upanishads, viz.—

(a) Shukla Yajur Veda's following Upanishads—Advai Tarak Upanishad, verse no. 14-18; Shatyayani Upanishad, verse no. 39; Nirālamba Upanishad, verse no. 30.

(b) Krishna Yajur Veda's following Upanishads—Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse no. 35; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 44; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 56-59, and Canto 6, verse no. 79; Kathrudra Upanishad, verse no. 39; Shuk-Rahasya Upanishad, in its verse no. 21; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 52-53; Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 3-4; and Canto 2, verse nos. 12-13; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 76; Rudra Upanishad, verse no. 3 (Lord Rudra is the universal Guru).

(c) Atharva Veda's following Upanishad—Manduka Upanishad, Mundak (Canto) 1, section 2, verse nos. 12-13; Tripadvibhūt Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 5, paragraph nos. 10-11, and Canto 8, paragraph no. 17, 1st stanza; Bhavana Upanishad, verse no. 1.

(d) A minor Upanishad named the 'Dwayo-panishad' is entirely dedicated to enumerating the chief characteristics of a Guru. It is not known to which Veda it precisely belongs.

(e) The *Anand Ramayan* (said to be written by sage Valmiki) narrates the virtues of the Guru in its Manohar Kand, Sarga (Canto) 3, verse nos. 7-17.

Who is a true Guru? This is a question which has baffled many a scholars. The word 'Guru' simply means a person who is one's teacher—be it in the field of knowledge that pertains to the world or the field that relates to the spiritual. He is the person who makes a person acquire knowledge that he did not have earlier.

The Upanishads explain the term Guru in detail and list the virtues that a wise and enlightened Guru is supposed to possess. They also outline the characteristics that a good disciple must have, and how best one can choose a good Guru.

The word *Guru* has two parts—viz. 'Gu' meaning darkness, and 'Ru' meaning light. Hence the word 'Guru' means a person who can remove the darkness symbolising ignorance and illusions that has engulfed the disciple from all sides and act as a hindrance or an obstacle in his emancipation and salvation by showing him the truthful path, or lighting his path with the light of knowledge and holding out his hands to support him when he falters. Therefore he is an exalted, revered and much sought after person who can remove the darkness of ignorance of his follower by showing him the light of knowledge and guides him whenever he finds himself in a moral dilemma and quandary. He is the person who is both the moral preceptor as well as the spiritual guide of his disciple. He is supposed to act as a neutral advisor to his ward in all matters temporal and spiritual. The disciple is expected to confide in him his greatest of secrets without the fear of betrayal or blackmail. He is the one who is expected to have risen above all kinds of vested interests and keeps the welfare of the disciple as his main objective. He is the one who has transcended the mundane and has acquired sublime awareness of the supreme Reality, because only those who are themselves aware of anything can hope to tell others about it. Therefore it is deemed that only a person of high mental, intellectual, spiritual and ethical caliber can become a true Guru.

A true Guru is treated as being equivalent to the 'Trinity Gods'—(1) Brahma, the creator, because he creates or helps to take birth good virtues and noble qualities in his disciple; (2) Vishnu, the sustainer, because he nourishes, sustains and helps to inculcate and develop wisdom and enlightenment in his disciple and leads him on the truthful path; and (3) Shiva, the concluder, because he helps to end, conclude and eliminate ignorance and negative traits in his disciple. He is 'God like' because he functions in all these capacities at the same time, besides being exalted in all knowledge, being virtuous, of high moral character and beyond reproach, being a source of unbound spiritual energy, being self realised and enlightened, and being eternal in the sense that what he advises to his disciple, the path he shows, the light that he lights in the dark heart of the creature, makes him immortal. The

Rudra Upanishad, verse no. 3 explicitly asserts that Lord Shiva is the universal Guru of all, and that the Guru is Shiva personified in this form.

Therefore, a Guru is honoured for the divine virtues that he represents and embodies, that he teaches and implements in his life, for the divinity, for the Lord and for the personification of the great teachings of the scriptures that he exemplifies.

When the teacher (Guru) is especially pleased with a particular student, he would naturally be inclined to pay more attention to him as compared to others. This is natural for him because he sees in this student a spark of great future, a soul who would sincerely and honestly carry forward the teacher's legacy forward and make his teachings as well as his name and fame immortal. As for other less brilliant and devoted students, or those who are just mediocre and run-of-the-mill sort, the teacher has no such grand expectations from them. So he prefers to impart the best of education to his special and most-favoured student. The teacher would even unravel top secrets to him because he is confident that this disciple would never misuse them and also understand these secrets correctly and properly. This relationship is just like a father of more than one son. The father would have a natural love for the son in whom he sees a bright future and from whom he expects the family's good name and fortune to get a boost as compared to those sons who are like blights on the family.

The Guru is regarded as a personification of the great knowledge of the scriptures (refer Tripadvibut Maha-Narayan Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 5, paragraph no. 10), as well as Lord Maha Vishnu himself (refer Tripadvibut Maha-Narayan Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 8, paragraph no. 17, 1st stanza). It is not his physical body that is of any value for veneration, for the eternal 'soul' and not the physical gross body is venerable.

The Bhavana Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its opening verse no. 1 emphasizes the importance of true Guru and says that he is the primary source of Shakti (strength, energy, vitality, vigour and authority) for the spiritual aspirant and his primary advisor and moral support. The aspirant relies on the authority of the Guru and his knowledge to faithfully move ahead in a field which is still unknown to him and un-chartered by him, without the fear of going on the wrong path or falling prey to uncertainties.

The wise, learned and enlightened Guru (a moral preceptor, guide and teacher) is a true advisor and guide for a spiritual aspirant. He is the one who acts as the primary source of strength and support that empowers the person to move ahead on his spiritual path and ultimately attain success in his endeavours. He is the virtual 'Shakti' or source of energy, motivation, strength, power and authority that provides the necessary support, impetus and dynamism to all the efforts made by the aspirant to reach his goal in life successfully. But for this to materialize, the Guru himself should be an expert in his field, and inclined to helpful and supporting; he should be a teacher, a preceptor, a motivator, an advisor, a friend and a guide all rolled into one.

This verse is a sort of salutation to the teacher, and showing of honour and respect to him. He is the one who deftly guides the student of spiritualism, or for that matter in any field of learning, on the correct path, warning him of the numerous pitfalls, and how to overcome them successfully. In this context, this verse can be read as follows also—A man who is wise, learned and enlightened is the one who is eligible to become a true teacher who guides and advises a spiritual aspirant. Such a teacher is the disciple's or a student's real friend and support; he provides his ward (the disciple or the student) the much-needed moral support, guidance, motivation and inspiration to move ahead even when the former appears to have lost hope and the drive to move ahead. It is the teacher or the Guru who removes all darkness symbolized by ignorance and delusions, and instead lights up the path to success for his ward. The Guru picks up the ward whenever he stumbles and falls, or is down in the docks; the Guru instills confidence and hope in him when he is dejected and hopeless. The Guru provides the necessary impetus to the disciple to move ahead and rise up against all odds and misfortunes. This is why the Guru is called the primary form of Shakti for the spiritual aspirant. Even as any endeavour needs 'Shakti' (dynamism, energy, vitality, strength, impetus, drive) to succeed, the Guru is the one who provides this much-needed Shakti to the spiritual aspirant.

The *Mundak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Mundak 1, section 2, verse nos. 12-13 describes the importance of the Guru as follows—

“Verse no. 12 = Wise men (who have understood this reality and are eager for finding the truthful way that would give permanent spiritual rewards) approach some learned and enlightened Guru (a moral preceptor, teacher and guide) who is not only well-versed in the ‘truth’ of Brahm as enshrined in the Vedas but is also a firm believer in this ‘truth’ known as Brahm and is a practitioner of this ‘truth’. It is only he who can show the spiritual aspirant the correct path leading to Brahm and teach him about the supreme knowledge of Brahm (12).

“Verse no. 13 = This enlightened and Brahm-realised Guru is obliged to welcome the aspirant, who is calm in his demeanours and has obtained full control over his sense organs, as his disciple. The teacher should teach him the divine and eclectic knowledge of Brahm, a knowledge called ‘Brahm Vidya’, so that the eager disciple can have a comprehensive knowledge of the truthful and eternal Brahm (13).

The Advai Tarak Upanishad, verse no. 14-18 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition elaborately describes the virtues that a true Guru should possess. These verses are being quoted here for ready reference—

“Verse no.14-15—A Guru should be well versed in the tenets of the Vedas or the knowledge contained in them, must possess the best of virtues and characters and be exemplary in his behaviours and temperament, should be an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu (the sustainer and Lord of the world), should be free from the tainting effects of such negative traits as Matsar (i.e. jealousy, envy, anger, wrathfulness) etc.¹, should be an expert in the art, craft and science of Yoga (meditation techniques and contemplative practices) and devoted towards them (i.e. must practice them himself, and be sincere and honest about his firm conviction about their efficacy), should be so involved in the philosophy of Yoga that it forms his way of life and soul (i.e. the philosophy of Yoga should be reflected in his personal life and his preaching should hold conviction), should be immaculate, pure and uncorrupt, should be devoted towards his own Guru, and should be diligent and committed towards attaining the supreme Lord at all costs.

According to the Varaha Upanishad, canto 1 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, there are six enemies which are metaphors for the various faults that are associated with a creature. They are the following—Kaam (lust, passions, desires and yearnings), Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness, ill-temper), Lobh (greed, rapacity), Moha (attraction, infatuations, attachments, delusions and ignorance), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, false pride, hypocrisy and ego) and Matsarya (envy, jealousy, malice and ill-will)

“Verse no. 16—The word Guru has two letters—viz. ‘Gu’ and ‘Ru’. The word Gu means darkness, while the word Ru refers to that which can remove or dispel that darkness. Hence, he who is able to remove or dispel the darkness of ignorance and delusions, who prevents these elements from spreading their tentacles of darkness, and in case the darkness already exists then he is able to remove it with his auspicious advice and guidance, and who is able to liberate his disciple from the clutches of this all engulfing darkness that threatens to drown him is called a Guru.

“Verse no. 17—A Guru is akin to the supreme Brahm personified; a Guru is the supreme abode or shelter that provides succour and solace to the tormented soul of the disciple and the last port of call for him, a Guru is like a treasury of transcendental and eclectic knowledge of divinity, and a Guru is the best person who should be consulted and followed by a disciple who sees him as a role model to be emulated.

“Verse no. 18—A Guru represents the best of values and the highest stature a person can ever hope to attain, and a Guru is the best asset that a person possesses (because he gives him good advice and props up his sagging morale during his bad days, he can be faithfully relied upon with no fear of betrayal, he shows him the auspicious, noble and righteous path when he is in

a dilemma, he acts as a beacon of hope for his disciple when the rest of the world has betrayed him, and he never has any vested interest in anything other than what is good and fortunate for his disciple and which would ensure his all round welfare and happiness). A person who gives the best advice according to given circumstances and time is said to be the best of all Gurus as far as the disciple is concerned.

We should note here that the Upanishads have a very broad and open minded approach to any subject; they are not dogmatic and rigid in their doctrines. A person may be expert in any one field but not in another, and this does not mean that the disciple should not benefit from this man for the knowledge that he possesses. Therefore, for a particular problem a disciple may have one Guru, but for another problem that confronts him he might as well have another. It is not binding upon him that once he has accepted a particular person as his Guru he cannot accept another person as his second Guru. The main function of the institution of a Guru is to help a disciple in all his endeavours, but in an auspicious and righteous manner. Even one's own father and mother and wife and son and friend, and for that matter even one's enemy can be a Guru if they can enlighten the person in a particular field.

There is a minor Upanishad called Dwayo-panishad which describes the chief characteristics of a true Guru. It has only seven Mantras. This Upanishad is being cited here verse by verse to clearly highlight the main features of a Guru:---

'(a) Verse nos.1-2= A person is called a Guru if he is endowed with enlightenment and wisdom making him well versed and skilled in the Vedas, both in their literal knowledge as well as in the profound wisdom and the ethereal and eclectic metaphysical and spiritual philosophy they contain, who is an ardent devotee and sincere follower of Lord Vishnu, who is free from such negative traits as jealousy, envy and malice, who is well versed and skilled in the various holy and divine Mantras, their usage, their ethereal importance and spiritual significance as well as all other matters related with them, who is sincerity devoted to those Mantras and has firm belief, conviction and faith in them, who seeks the shelter and refuge of those Mantras, who is pure and immaculate, uncorrupt and unpolluted in any form, who is devoted and dedicated to his own Guru, and who is well versed and skilled not only in all the Purans but all other scriptures as well.

(b) Verse no.3= A person is called a Guru who has a comprehensive and holistic knowledge and understanding of all the scriptures, and who not only preaches righteousness, probity and propriety as well as nobility of thoughts and actions but also lives them and implements them in their letter and spirit in his personal life.

(c) Verse no. 4= The letter 'Gu' means darkness, while the letter 'Ru' means that which remove that darkness. Hence, Guru is one who removes the darkness representing ignorance and delusions that are so typically associated with this deluding world.

(d) Verse no.5= A true Guru is equivalent to the supreme and transcendental Brahman; he is the ultimate destination for a seeker; he is a fount of the supreme knowledge and the source of the best of such knowledge; he is deemed to be the best and the greatest asset for a man.

(e) Verse no.6= A Guru is the best thing a wise seeker seeks and searches for, he is the best and the supreme place for seeking refuge and shelter with, and he being a dispenser of the profoundest of wisdom and knowledge is deemed to be a person who is the most important, who has the highest standards of greatness and magnificence, who is most dignified and meritorious, who is most weighty and significant, and who is most distinct and outstanding in all aspects.

(f) Verse no.7= Pronouncing the word 'Guru' even once enables the aspirant to access liberation and deliverance from this entrapping and deluding world. All his efforts are deemed to have been successful by simply saying this powerful word sincerely. Such a man does never come back (enters the cycle of birth and death) in this world again—verily, this is the truth. Those who understand this fact correctly get the desired fruit'.

The Shatyayani Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 39 describes the virtues of a true Guru. This verse describes the importance and glory of a moral preceptor,

spiritual guide, an all-rounder advisor and a practical teacher, called a Guru. It is deemed here that he is wise, erudite, sagacious, learned and enlightened, simply because only a person who knows something himself can teach it to others; the rest are only imposters. It says—“Guru is the supreme Dharma. That is, one should faithfully serve and follow the advice and instructions of one’s Guru just like one must sincerely, diligently and ardently follow one’s religiously sanctioned norms of behaviour and righteous codes of conduct, duties and responsibilities, which are collectively called a person’s Dharma as established by the scriptures. It also refers to a noble conduct that is conducive to happiness and liberation from the shackles that tie a creature to the deluding and entrapping world.

Likewise, the Guru is the last shelter and refuge for a person (because it is he who guides a person when he is confused, doubtful and perplexed; when he needs support and succour; when he needs a true friend by his side). It is he who guides a person on the correct path and removes all consternations from his mind; it is in him that a disciple can confide without any fear of betrayal, back-stabbing, blackmailing and revenge. It is he who sincerely and selflessly advises a person on all matters as it is in him a person blindly reposts all faith and confidence. In fact, a Guru is the best council.

A person who does not show due respect and honour to the Guru who has selflessly given him the bounty of truthful knowledge, who teaches him and makes him wiser, more knowledgeable, skilled and educated, then all the Gyan (i.e. all the knowledge, all skills, all wisdom, all erudition and all learning that the person has acquired or gained) as well as all the good effects of the Tapa (i.e. penances, austerities, sufferings and hardships that he has endured in his quest for an all round welfare and enhancement) gradually fade away or decline and lose their potentials, powers, prowess and effects, rendering that unfaithful, ungrateful and disloyal disciple shorn of all glories, fame and moral strengths that should have otherwise accrued to him just like the case where water slowly seeps out of an earthen pot made from half-baked mud. [In other words, if a man does not show due respect to his teacher, he will be cursed and all the good virtues that would have normally given him good name and fame would abandon him. He would be deemed to be unfaithful, ungrateful and disloyal, and would be just like a traitor who has betrayed his country. No good virtues would stay with him.] [39].”

The Shuk-Rahasya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 21 describes the glory of a true Guru in these words—“ One should mentally remember one’s Guru, show due respect and pay homage to him most reverentially in the following words—‘He (i.e. the wise, erudite, sagacious, most learned, enlightened, and self-realised moral preceptor, spiritual guide and teacher) always sports a cheerful and pleasant disposition.

He is an embodiment of the best of blessings and virtues that bestow all round welfare and happiness to his followers (disciples), and whose mere presence is very comforting and reassuring for them.

He is a living personification of Gyan (which is pure and truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment).

He is beyond the reach of perplexities and vexations created by the sense of duality in this world, leading to contradictory thoughts, emotions and sentiments that create unnecessary doubts, dichotomy and confusions. That is, he is mentally stable and steadfast in his convictions and beliefs; he is not swayed by the buffeting effects of adversities, turmoil and suspense that are so characteristic of this delusory world.

He has the subtle and sublime characteristics that are so unique to the sky. That is, he remains aloof and detached from everything like the sky; he is not tainted or affected by anything or any circumstance in this world much like the sky in which uncountable varieties of things are embedded in Nature but which remains inherently untainted and uncorrupted by any of them. This is inspite of him (the Guru) being surrounded by all the material objects, impurities and delusions that are so characteristic of this world. The Guru is constantly being buffeted by so many numerous and divergent impulses originating from this material world which is like a trap in which even the most learned persons fall, but inspite of these distractions and constant gnawing he remains flawless and faultless like the sky. He is a

repository of knowledge and has a depth of enlightenment that is as vast, endless and fathomless as the sky; he remains calm and serene like the distant recesses of the vast and endless sky. In short, a true Guru is comparable to the grand virtues as possessed by the sky element.

He keeps his attention fixed on one essential 'truth', the element which is supreme, transcendental, non-dual and most truthful, instead of allowing his mind and intellect to wander here and there in myriad theories, doctrines and philosophies, leading to immense confusions, uncertainties and consternations as well as distress and vexations for the spirit much like a ship that is being tossed around in a choppy ocean.

He is 'one and perpetual'. That is, he is steady and stable as a rock in his beliefs, convictions, words, emotions, sentiments and thoughts; he is not of a fickle mind and character; he is not swayed by and swept off his moorings by myriad distractions and divergent influences which are characteristic attributes of this material world of delusions; he is unchanging and unwavering; he believes in one non-dual supreme Truth which is eternal and infinite.

He is most pure, uncorrupt, untainted and without any blemish of any kind.

He remains unruffled and unmoved, maintaining his equanimity and calmness even under adversities and unfavourable circumstances, such as during periods of extreme emotional turmoil and stress because he is full of the eclectic virtues of being dispassionate, calm, neutral and detached from everything. Instead, he remains ever submerged in a perpetual state of equanimity and bliss.

He is like an all-knowing, wise, expert and sagacious, but a neutral and detached witness to what the mortal world and its inhabitants do, being a dispassionate and un-involved observer to the happenings around him in this world.

He is full of equanimity, fortitude and evenness of mind and heart, remaining untouched and unaffected by the rocking effects of various emotions and sentiments that continuously pummel his heart, mind and intellect, and perpetually disturb him by intruding into his stoic calmness and peaceful demeanors.

He is free from being tainted or affected by the apparent good or bad effects of the three legendary Gunas or qualities inherent in all the living creatures, and which create distortions in the basically clean fiber symbolising the inherently pure and immaculate character of any individual's true self (i.e. his Atma; his consciousness). [These three Gunas are Sata or the noble quality which creates propensity for righteousness and noble behaviour, Raja is the second quality which creates worldly desires and aspirations, leading to the predominance of such characters that make a creature worldly wise, and Tama which is the meanest and lowest quality, creating the tendency for sinful conduct. All these three qualities are present in a person, but his individuality is decided by the ratio in which these three are present. The 'inherent purity' refers to the immaculacy of the Atma which is the 'true self' of all living beings. These Gunas cast their shadow on the shine of the self-illuminated and immaculate Atma, making the individual appear to exhibit certain artificial taints and characteristics that are extraneous to his true self. This is like the case of the shadow of the moon falling upon the earth when it comes between the sun and the earth, giving rise to the solar eclipse. The sun has not lost its shine and neither is there a night during the day, but the optical impression created by this intervention of the moon makes it appear to be so. Similarly, the immaculate Atma appears to be tainted and darkened when these Gunas cast their shadow upon it. The resultant effect is that the individual does not appear to be as holy and divine as he actually is. In the case of a wise Guru, it is deemed that he has gained sufficient control over his self that none of these three Gunas are able to display their characteristic behaviour, thereby making the Guru absolutely neutral and pristine pure like a piece of crystal.]

I bow most reverentially and devotedly to such a Guru who possesses these virtues as narrated in this verse. [It is to be noted here that the eclectic and sublime virtues enumerated here are the virtues of the Supreme Being or Brahm. In other words, that Guru who is possessed of these attributes is no less revered than Brahm; he is equivalent to Brahm; he is Divinity personified.] (21)."

Let us see briefly how Tulsidas praises the Guru in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, stanza no. 5 of first Sortha with which this epic opens, followed by verses from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1, to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2.

“I pay my obeisance at the holy lotus-like feet of a Guru who is like an ocean of mercy and grace, who is like a personified form of Lord Hari (Vishnu, the Supreme Lord), and whose words of wisdom are equivalent to the brilliant rays of the sun so far as removing the darkness of ignorance is concerned. (Stanza no. 5 of the first Sortha of Baal Kand)

I pay my obeisance to the nectar (‘Paraag’) that is symbolically present in this lotus like holy feet of a Guru. This nectar is extremely delicious, fragrant and succulent. [That is, it provides happiness and bliss to the worshipper in the same way as the nectar does to the bee.] (Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1)

The auspicious dust of the feet of the Guru is like an herbal powder made from the Sanjivani herb (that injects life into a lifeless creature). [That is, by worshipping the holy feet of the Guru the worshipper receives his blessings, and this in turn rejuvenates his inner-self by cleansing it of all taints and delusions associated with the world, as well as illuminating it with the light of knowledge.] (Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 1)

This auspicious dust is equivalent to the holy ash smeared on the divine body of Lord Shiva. It is a producer and bestower of all welfare and happiness (upon the worshipper). (Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 1)

This dust removes the (spiritual) dirt clinging to the mirror represented by the devotee’s heart and mind. [That is, just like the case when one can see an object clearly when the mirror is scrubbed clean, the worshipper is able to remove all delusions from his mind and free his heart of all worldly attachments so much so that now he can experience the bliss of self-realisation that comes with experiencing the presence of the Atma, the cosmic Consciousness that is known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Conscious Being, in his own bosom. Once all veils of ignorance are removed, once the thick layers after layers of numerous faults and impurities are scrubbed off, the spiritual aspirant is able to witness the inherent blissful and peaceful nature of the ‘truthful self’ known as the Atma. This is the aim of all spiritual practices—to realise the Truth and Reality by overcoming all delusions and ignorance.] (Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 1)

The nails of the feet of the Guru have the sublime shine resembling that of gems so much so that their light illuminates the subtle heart of the worshipper as soon as he remembers them. [This is symbolism only. It simply means that when one worships the Guru’s holy feet his mind and heart should be focused on its subtle and ethereal aspect, its sublime and spiritual value, and not on its grosser physical appearance such as the colour of the skin of the feet, whether they are wrinkled and chafed due to old age and hardships of life, if the nails are healthy or rough and brittle, etc. Just as a pearl for instance has a subtle silken glow and smoothness that is inherent to it inspite of the fact that its origin is in an oyster and the ocean, the nails of the feet of the Guru also enables the worshipper to illuminate his inner self with the light of ‘consciousness’ that comes from within. The ‘supreme consciousness’ lives in the subtle space of the heart of the spiritual aspirant in the form of an ethereal entity known as the ‘Atma’. This Atma is self-illuminated, and its realisation makes the inner-self of the worshipper glow with the light of self-realisation like the inherent shine of a priceless piece of gem.] (Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 1)

This light of knowledge and self-realisation that springs forth spontaneously in the subtle heart of the spiritual aspirant is able to dispel and eliminate completely all traces of darkness of ignorance and delusions that had earlier shrouded his inner-self. He is very lucky and fortunate in whose heart this light burns. (Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 1)

As soon as this light illuminates one’s heart, the subtle eyes of wisdom and enlightenment open spontaneously. This in turn removes all the fears and horrors arising from the darkness of night symbolized by this world and its delusions. [A man sees many imaginary ghosts and phantoms in the darkness of the night, but as soon as daylight dawns, they vanish, and all fears and terrors arising from these phantoms go away automatically. Similarly, as soon as wisdom, self-realisation and enlightenment sprouts in the inner-self of

the spiritual aspirant, all his fears having their genesis in the darkness of ignorance run away.] (Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 1)

The grand spiritual benefit of this self-illuminating light of wisdom and enlightenment that begins to shine in one's inner-being upon self-realisation, accompanied by the ability to see things that have a subtle, sublime and ethereal existence (as opposed to those that have gross and mundane existence in this physical gross material world), enables the seeker to see and understand the esoteric secrets of the divine story of Lord Ram, and be privileged enough to be able to peer behind the exterior to have a divine glimpse the glittering gems, large and small, of profound spiritual value that lie embedded in this holy story but are normally hidden from view. (Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 1).

It is like the case of some especially empowered and sanctified magical ointment that experts who possess occult powers (such as the Siddhas) apply on their eyes to be able to see hidden treasures, such as mines of gems and precious stones etc., inside mountains, forests and earth. (Doha no. 1)

The holy dust of the Guru's august feet is like this especially empowered magical ointment that is soothing and soft for the eyes, and it removes all diseases of the eyes. [This line must be properly interpreted. The eye referred to here in this verse is the subtle inner-eye of the mind and intellect, and not the physical eye of the gross body. It is not the physical organ of the gross body that is known as the eye with which one sees the grosser aspects of the equally gross world of material sense objects, and therefore it also does not refer to some physical disease of the eye.

The 'disease' here is the spiritual problems arising out of delusions and ignorance that prevents the creature to see the Truth and Reality. Worshipping the holy feet of the Guru and focusing the mind on the dust of his holy feet acts like a medicine for this subtle disease. It enables a person to develop wisdom and ability to see what is wrong, unethical and unrighteous, and segregate it from what is wise, righteous, ethical and correct. It opens the eyes of wisdom, erudition and discrimination that allow the man to see and examine the surrounding world intelligently and analytically. It is like removing cataract from one's eyes when suddenly he begins to see the whole world clearly, brightly. The auspicious reward of worshipping the holy feet of the Guru is that this empowers the spiritual aspirant to have the ability to have deep insight into the reality of the world and its existence with eyes of wisdom that can see behind the shroud of delusions that surround the entire world like a thick veil of smoke, preventing clarity of sight.] (Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 2)

Using this dust like an eye-ointment, I (Tulsidas) clean my eyes of wisdom and erudition so that I may be able to narrate the esoteric, sublime, holy and divine story of Lord Ram that is known as Ram Charit Manas. (2) (Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2)."]

चौ०. मंत्र जाप मम दृढ़ बिस्वासा । पंचम भजन सो बेद प्रकासा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

mantra jāpa mama dṛṛha bisvāsā. pañcama bhajana sō bēda prakāsā. 1.

Doing Japa with my (holy) name (i.e. repeating the holy name of Lord Ram as a spiritual formula), and having firm faith and belief in me—verily, this is the fifth form of Bhakti and is highlighted even in the Vedas (the primary scriptures).

[The fifth form of devotion is to constantly and persistently repeat and remain engrossed and submerged in my holy and divine name, and have unflinching and steady faith and conviction in its glory and divinity as revealed in the Vedas.]

{The first half of this line can be interpreted as follows also—"Doing Japa with my name ('Ram'), and having a firm faith in it—i.e. in the power of the holy

name as well as the efficacy of the process of repeating it as done during Japa) as a means of attaining bliss and eternity as well as liberation and deliverance-----”} (1)

[Note—The fifth mean of doing Bhakti is ‘constant repetition of Lord Ram’s holy name ‘RAM’’. This is also reiterated earlier in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 129 by sage Valmiki when he lists the various virtues that one must possess in order to enable Lord Ram to make his august presence in the devotee’s inner-self. The same idea is repeated by Lord Ram when he preaches Laxman about Bhakti in Aranya Kand, Doha no. 16 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 9.

Sage Valmiki has honoured Lord Ram’s holy name as a ‘Mantra-raaj’ or the king of all Mantras. A Mantra is a divine esoteric formula consisting of letters, syllables, words, phrases or even full hymns that are said to possess special spiritual magical powers that help the aspirant achieve some great goal that is otherwise not possible by other means. The Mantra acts as a catalyst and a dynamic force propelling the aspirant towards his desired goal. Each deity has its own Mantra which is like a cosmic key that enables the worshipper to tap that deity’s powers.

The Mantra of Lord Ram has many variations—the most potent one is its basic form known as the Beej Mantra or the seed from which the rest of the Mantras derive their empowerment. It consists of the Sanskrit syllable that when pronounced is heard as the word ‘Raam’. In the purest form of this Mantra, the letter ‘m’ is silent, and there is a dot on the top which renders the pronunciation something like ‘ng’ as in the word *rung* or *wrung* in English. Therefore, the actual pronunciation is ‘Raa(ng)’.

Incidentally, this Beej Mantra of Lord Ram is also the Mantra of the Fire God. This has great metaphoric value and importance. The ‘fire’ represents the most powerful and dynamic force in creation. It is never corrupted. It burns all impurities and leaves alone the pure metal—a virtue used for purifying gold. It glows with its own light, illuminating the area around it and chasing away darkness. It provides heat and energy so much essential for life in this world. Under its influence the air becomes active—as is witnessed when wind begins to blow and howl near a raging fire. It is the warmth of the fire that helps earth foster life, to help crops grow, to help cook food and to digest this food in the body to provide nourishment to the creature.

The symbolism and parallel is obvious. The holy name of Lord Ram is the dynamic force that subtly and imperceptibly sustains life in this creation; it is at the core of the ‘consciousness’ that keeps the world alive. The repetition of this holy name fans the wind of enlightenment that drives the impurities away; it burns all the impurities.

This holy name of the Lord, i.e. the Mantra ‘Raam’ is known as the ‘Tarak Mantra’ as it takes a creature across the vast ocean represented by this world, its myriad horrors and miseries, and its whirlpool of birth and death which keeps the creature trapped in its vortex.

The general meaning and understanding of the word *Japa* is ‘constant repetition of any holy name of the God or any divine word or Mantra’. This verse tells us that if that is not possible for a man, or if he is not interested in it, then the next best option for him is to read good books. This will have similar good effects on his mind as doing ‘Japa’. Because if the mind is not kept busy, it will gravitate towards corrupt and pervert thinking; it cannot sit idle. If it is not possible to leash it by means of chanting or repetition of ‘Mantras’, then at least it should be reined in by reading good books instead of allowing it to wander aimlessly here and there like a vagrant indulging in useless roaming about. Remember, an idle mind is the workshop of devil. See also Trishikhi Brahmno-panishad, verse nos. 2/28-34 of Shukla Yajur Veda in this context.

The Shandilya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, section 2 says that Japa is one of the ten Niyams or spiritual observances that any spiritual aspirant should practice. It then defines Japa and its types as follows—“Japa is to honestly practice (repeat and meditate upon) the Vedic Mantra (hymn) that has been prescribed by one’s Guru (moral preceptor). Japa is done in two ways—one is verbal or audible, and the other is non-verbal or mental or silent. The mental or silent form of Japa is done by repeating the Mantra mentally

in a silent mode without uttering a word audibly, and involves concentration of the mind and turning its thoughts inwards. The verbal or audible form of Japa is again of two types—viz. one that is done loudly and the other that is simply muttered. The Japa done while muttering the Mantras is thousands of times more beneficial than doing Japa loudly, and mental Japa that is done silently is far better than even the one done by slowly muttering and it's multiple times more beneficial."

The *importance and benefits of doing Japa* has been emphasized in the Atharva Veda's Gopal Purva Tapini Upanishad, verse no. 16 as follows—"Those devotees who do Japa (repetition) with the holy Mantra of the Lord having five steps and eighteen letters by prefixing them with the ethereal salutary word 'OM' standing for the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, are the ones to whom the Lord voluntarily reveals his true divine and holy form in the form of the cosmic Consciousness known as the Atma. That is, such persons become self-realised and enlightened. This is also tantamount to Brahm-realisation.

Hence, those who are desirous of finding liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle them to this delusory, mortal and entrapping world are advised to do Japa with this holy Mantra.' (16).

The word *Japa* is derived from the root word 'jap' meaning to utter. Hence, doing Japa means to utter or repeat the different Mantra which are spiritual formulas in the form of sounds, syllables, letters, words, phrases or sentences such as complete hymns that have a high level of cosmic spiritual energy inherent in them.

The Bhagvat Gita, 10/25 considers Japa as a manifestation of the Lord God (or the worshipped deity) himself.

Japa has three forms—(i) When the Mantras are said aloud it is called 'Vaikhari Japa' or 'Vaachika Japa'. (ii) When the Mantras are inaudible and merely uttered or whispered, the Japa is called 'Upaamshu'. And (iii) when it is done mentally without opening the mouth, the Japa is called 'Maansika'.

Further, there are different classes of Japa depending upon their usage as follows—

(i) Nitya Japa—that Japa which is done daily and regularly.

(ii) Naimittik Japa—that Japa which is done on special occasions—such as on the days of eclipses or special worship days.

(iii) Kaamya Japa—that Japa which is done for the fulfillment of certain desires—such as acquisition of wealth or success in any endeavour.

(iv) Praayaschita Japa—that Japa which is done as a penance, for repentance or for expiation of sins.

(v) Ajapaa-Japa—that which is done along with the passage of breath through the body as inhalation and exhalation. Usually the Hans Mantra is used for this by acclaimed ascetics.

(vi) Vilom Japa—that Japa in which the Mantra is repeated in the reverse order. This sort of Japa is usually done to counter the negative effects of black magic rites.

(vii) Likhit Japa—that Japa in which the Mantras are written down on paper.

Since each Mantra has a Rishi (one who first witnessed the revelation of the particular Mantra and experienced its profound effects), a Chanda (poetical style), and a Devta (the deity to whom the Mantra is dedicated), the devotee is required to pay his homage to all of them before starting to repeat the Mantra or do Japa.

Usually a prayer rosary is used to do Japa, but when one has become spiritually uplifted or has practices doing Japa over a long period of time the need for the rosary is not felt. Then the Japa becomes automatic and natural to him.

A *Mantra* is a Holy name of the Lord; a group of divine syllables or word symbols which have divine mystical powers. Mantras are mystical formulas having divine powers. They consist of letters, words or phrases and used to invoke the blessings of the chosen deity. Each deity has a specific Mantra just like each element in Nature has been assigned specific symbol

in modern science. For example, hydrogen is recognised by the letter H, oxygen by O, nitrogen by N, carbon by C etc.

The ancient religious text honouring different Gods were composed in a poetical style called the Chanda. This system of composing the religious text of the scriptures is in vogue since earlier times and such verses are called hymns as they are dedicated to the offering of prayers and honouring the chosen deity for which the particular hymns is meant. These hymns are also called 'Mantras' because they are like mystical formula specific to that deity; they help the worshipper to activate the dynamic forces of Nature and creation as represented by this deity who is actually a personified form of these forces. Each deity had a particular hymns dedicated to it much like we have specific formulas in science or mathematics to solve specific problems. No one formula applies to all the problems in a universal manner, though there are some universal ones also which can be applied to all the cases, such as the Mantra OM which is used equally for all the deities. The reason is that OM represents the supreme transcendental Brahm whose manifestations all these individual deities or Godheads are. This is like the case of one listening to a particular radio station of his choice when he must tune-in to the particular frequency in which that radio station broadcasts.

The Atharva Veda's Hayagriva Upanishad, verse nos. 18-19 tell us how the Mantras should be repeated during Japa, and the importance of the Mantras in helping the spiritual aspirant reach the ecstasy of spiritual realisation by citing the example of the snake and the sound of the Indian lute.

Atharva Veda's Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 12-13 describe the concept of 'Mantra' elaborately. Let us see how this concept is explained by this Upanishad in the context of the Mantras of Lord Ram—

"Verse no. 12 = Whatever deeds and actions an aspirant or seeker does or undertakes to do to achieve his goal are successful through the medium of a Mantra. The Mantra is a medium by which desired results are easily and comfortably attained; they are aids to one's fulfillment of desires and objectives in life—whether mundane or spiritual*. A Mantra makes the attainment of the desired goal a certainty.

A Mantra indicates the result or rewards that can be expected by using it just like a certain ingredient in a medicine can indicate in advance what one can expect by the use of that particular formulation. [This is because each Mantra is like a mathematical formula, and each hymn is like an equation. Even as definitive results follow the use of certain pre-determined formula and equation in scientific quest or mathematical calculations, definitive results are also expected by employing specific Mantras for doing Japa (repetition) or Yoga (meditation) and Dhyan (contemplation) with specific objectives in mind.]

The word Mantra is derived from two words—the first word is '*Manan*' which means to persistently remember something so as to make the mind firmly rooted in it, to ponder and contemplate upon it, to deeply think about it and meditate on it so that one can arrive at some certain conclusion about the truth of that particular thing, while the second word '*Taan*' means to give freedom and protection from some kind of torment or miserable condition, to deliver someone from his miseries and predicaments etc. Hence, a Mantra is an instrument by the help of which a person can find spiritual liberation and deliverance from his worldly torments and miseries. This is achieved by concentrating upon the Mantra, by relying upon its mystical powers and spiritual potentials, and using it to do meditation and contemplation. Constant repetition of the Mantra helps to multiply its effect and reinforce its earlier benefits. [Repetition of the Mantra is necessary for its full benefits to accrue and take effect. It's just like the case of a patient having to repeat a medicine over a long period of time to get rid of some chronic disease. If he stops taking it before the disease is completely routed, then not only would the disease relapse but it would do so with a vengeance. Another example can be cited about a man's skills and expertise in a professional field—if he discontinues using his knowledge and skills after some time in life, he forgets about them and gets out of tune. All the long years he had spent acquiring the knowledge and the special skill go to a waste if they are not practiced for a lifetime. Similarly, repetition of Mantras and practice of meditation is a life-long process, and a wise man should persevere with them.] (12).

*In the present case, this Mantra that is employed for doing Japa is the ‘Ram Mantra’ which is a Tarak Mantra (refer Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 1). This indicates that the aspirant seeks his final spiritual liberation and deliverance rather than hoping to get some worldly gain by employing it. Being a ‘Tarak Mantra’ instead of an ordinary Mantra, this Mantra of Lord Ram is the one that liberates the person from all spiritual delusions and worldly snares, and therefore to use it for some worldly accomplishments or gains would be absolutely absurd and ridiculous.

Again, since the Mantra of Lord Ram pertains to the cosmic Divinity known as the supreme transcendental Brahm which is pure Consciousness and the Absolute Truth of creation, it follows that a person who repeats this Mantra is deemed to be most enlightened and self as well as Brahm realised. He is deemed to have understood the great Truth of the ‘self’ and the Atma. He is rich with the divine virtues of Vairagya and Gyan as described in verse nos. 4-5 of this Canto 1 above.

While the eclectic Ram Mantra is used by a spiritual aspirant for his liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation, other Mantras of various demonination are used by other ordinary people to fulfill their worldly needs and desires, such as the case when one does a fire sacrifice to attain certain objectives in this world and uses various Mantras to successfully complete it. Such exercises are done with some sort of worldly aim in sight, such as acquiring various mystical powers called the Siddhis, or getting established in this world and attaining name, fame, majesty, strength, powers, material prosperity and wealth in this world, or for obtaining victory on opponents, and many other such desires and wishes for which a man usually uses a Mantra. But it is like bartering away the value of a precious gem in exchange of glass or worthless stone.

Every Mantra has a divine aspect; all of them have their own potentials and powers that are intrinsic to them, but it actually depends upon the user how good he makes of it. The wise one amongst them would obviously employ the stupendous powers and potentials inherent in any Mantra to obtain something of an eternal, abiding and matchless value—and what better use can one put the powers of the Mantra than to use it to find permanent freedom from the fetters that tie his soul to this deluding and tormenting world of a continues cycle of birth and death along with its attendant horrors and miseries.

And to top it all, if such a wise man happens to be privileged enough to come across a Mantra that is the best of them all, and which can be thousands of time more effective by putting in the least of efforts, and which gives direct access to the supreme Authority in creation which has the authority and power to grant the much-desired and much-awaited freedom for the seeker, what more can he want. Such a Mantra is this glorious ‘Ram Mantra’ which is the ‘Tarak Mantra’. It is divine, sublime, priceless and matchless in spiritual value, and provides a direct access to the supreme Brahm. This Mantra can provide ‘Mukti and Moksha’ single handedly; it is one-stop solution for all the spiritual woes of the creature as it bestows upon him liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation at one go. That is why those who accept it as their spiritual formula are deemed to be the wisest and the most enlightened souls in this creation. A man who comes to know about Lord Ram’s ‘Tarak Mantra’ would discard all other Mantras and accept this single Mantra whole-heartedly as a penance for all his spiritual problems.

This single Ram-Mantra is the letter and the spirit, the essence and the life of all the Mantras taken together. It is like the juice of all the Mantras extracted for the spiritual benefit of the spiritual aspirant. It combines at once all their varied meanings, their uses and goals, their holiness and divinity, their supernatural powers and mysticism. It is indeed like the crown jewel of all the Mantras, and it has the power and potential of all the Mantras put together into a single formula.

“Verse no. 13 = The Mantra of a deity is a complete representation of that deity.”

The *Tarak Mantras of Lord Ram* have been elaborately described in the following Upanishads dealing with the eclectic philosophy pertaining to the divinity of Lord Ram—Ram Rahasya Upanishad, Cantos 2-3, and 5; Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-12, 41-67;

Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 1; Canto 2, verse nos. 1-3; Canto 4, verse nos. 14; Canto 5, verse nos. 4/1-47; Canto 6, verse no. 1-6.

The Tarak Mantra of Lord Ram is elaborately described in Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition which is exclusively dedicated to Lord Ram, as well as in Tarak Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition which is dedicated to the subject of emancipation and salvation. The Tarak Mantra preached by Lord Shiva for the benefit of a dying man is that group of esoteric, ethereal and holy words, syllables or phrases that have stupendous magical, mystical and divine powers that can achieve miracles and bestows to the aspirant great potential and abilities, and one of them is the ability to find liberation and deliverance for one's own self, and when preached to others it can even liberate sinful creatures who can never expect to find emancipation themselves. It gives freedom from miseries, fears, torments and other misfortunes that devour a creature. It liberates a creature from the cycle of birth and death, the miseries and fears associated with this world, with old age, death and their accompanying horrors etc. (Atharva-shikhar Upanishad, 2/1; Advai-tarak Upanishad, 3; and Jabal Upanishad, canto 1. The ascetic/Yogi achieves liberation and deliverance by concentrating his internal thoughts at a point between the eyebrows where he realises the supreme, transcendental existence of Brahm, and he mentally one with Brahm after this realisation (Advai-tarak Upanishad, 2-3).]

छठ दम सील बिरति बहु करमा । निरत निरंतर सज्जन धरमा ॥ २ ॥

chaṭha dama sīla birati bahu karamā. nirata nirantara sajjana dharamā. 2.

The sixth form of Bhakti incorporates such grand virtues as 'Dam' (self restraint of the sense organs of perception and action the body), 'Sheel' (to be courteous, civilized, pleasant and polite; to have mildness of demeanours; to have good and virtues character), and 'Virati' from all involvements in doing so many things in this world (i.e. a sincere and profound sense of renunciation, detachment and dispassion from all material things of this mundane gross world, remaining free from their temptations, overcoming desires and passions pertaining to the world and the urge of the sense organs of the body for gratification etc., not allowing oneself to be unnecessarily involved in countless deeds related to this world because they sap one's energy, bind him to the material world in which the deed is done with the hope of enjoying its rewards, stoking the fire of passions, creating numerous emotional distractions by way of contradictions such as attachments or repulsions, elation or dejection, sorrows or happiness, and so on).

Besides the above, one should always endeavour to live a life according to the doctrines laid down for an auspicious way of life as lived by saintly, pious and holy people. [In other words, a devotee must strive to emulate the example of saints and other holy people whose company he is expected to keep. This will help him in practice to overcome his bad habits that might have become firmly rooted in him and take time to be thrown out. It cannot be done overnight, but require diligent practice. The community of saints in which he is accepted to take a fellowship as prescribed in the first form of Bhakti will serve him in good stead, and their example can be used by a sincere aspirant as a practical guide in his day-to-day handling of the affairs of the world and problems of life.] (2)

[Note—The sixth form of Bhakti is to have self restraint and inculcate noble and auspicious virtues such as humility, politeness, dignified existence, observing etiquette and social norms, to abstain from indulgences and remaining engrossed in multifarious worldly pursuits, and to

diligently and honestly follow the righteous and noble path shown by and fit for saints and sages who are wise, erudite, enlightened and sagacious.

The importance of the virtues listed in this line, viz. (i) self restraint, (ii) politeness, (iii) renunciation, and (iv) living like a true saint by emulating their example are also reflected in the sage Valmiki's advice in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 130 wherein the sage lists the following vices that one must avoid if he expects Lord Ram to live in his inner-self—Kaam (passions, lust), Krodha (anger), Mada (arrogance, hypocrisy), Maan (ego, pride), Moha (attachments, infatuations), Lobha (greed), Kshobha (sorrows, regret, depression, dejection), Raag and Droha (endearment with one and animosity with another), Kapat and Dambha (deceit, wickedness, conceit, pretensions etc.), and finally Maya (delusions and its attending hallucinations).

According to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, sage Valmiki lists some of the grand and auspicious virtues a true devotee of Lord Ram must possess to enable the Lord to live in his heart. Some of these eclectic characters are the following—to be friendly to all and think for their general welfare, to treat sorrow and happiness equally with great equanimity (Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 130); to feel happy by seeing the prosperity of others, and sorry at their misery (Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 130); to accept the good virtues of all and leave behind their vices, to suffer for the good of others such as Brahmins and cows representing learned people and humble creatures respectively (Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 131); those who are diligent followers of the various laws and principles of conduct (Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 131).

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 16, Lord Ram has told Laxman that a person desirous of having Bhakti should follow the path of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility etc.) which enables him to develop the virtue of Virati (renunciation and detachment).

Then the Lord further says that one should live a life according the laws and principles laid down in the scriptures, to develop the virtue of renunciation and detachment from all material sense objects of the gross world along with total indifference to their temptations, and follow the principle of Dharma that pertains to the Lord—i.e. the principles followed by saints and holy people. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 16.

The fact that one should have no vices as Kaam, Mada, Dhambha etc. is reiterated by Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 16 while teaching Laxman.]

सातवँ सम मोहि मय जग देखा । मोतें संत अधिक करि लेखा ॥ ३ ॥

sātavam̐ sama mōhi maya jaga dēkhā. mōtēm santa adhika kari lēkhā. 3.

The next form of Bhakti, the seventh, is to have a concept of my universal existence in the form of all things in this world, to see the whole creation as my image—i.e. to believe in the philosophy of non-duality; to understand that whatever is visible in this world is one or the other form of my own divine cosmic existence. Besides this, one must treat saints and sages as more honourable and revered than me. (3)

[Note—This universal view of existence of the Supreme Being is the fundamental philosophy of the Upanishads, and it is known as Advaita Vedanta. It stresses in the non-duality of the Absolute Truth which is known as cosmic Consciousness in metaphysics.

This is a system of thought based on the Upanishads, its chief exponent being Adi Shankaracharya. It espouses the philosophy of the unity of the individual's soul, his 'self' or the pure consciousness known as the Atma, with the supreme transcendental Brahman which is

the universal cosmic ‘Self’ or the cosmic Consciousness which is also regarded as the Absolute, the Truth and the Reality of existence. This philosophy of the universality of the soul and the cosmic Consciousness is the fundamental basis of Advaita Vedanta.

References—*Non-duality* or oneness or uniformity between Brahm, the cosmic Soul, and the Atma or the individual’s soul has been elaborately explained in all the major Upanishads because this is the basic theme around which the philosophy of the Upanishads is built. Some of these Upanishads are the following—

(i) Krishna Yajur Veda—Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 17, 81-110; Tejo Bindu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-43, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-51, 60-64, Canto 4, verse nos. 2-30, 69-79, Canto 5, verse nos. 1-75, 90-96, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-72; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 7-8; Skanda Upanishad, verse nos. 2-7; Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/15; Kathrudra Upanishad, verse no. 41-42; Akchu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 2-3, 29-31, 43; Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse nos. 35-39.

(ii) Shukla Yajur Veda’s Adhyatma Upanishad; Subala-panishad, Canto 3, 5, 7 (verse no. 1), and 9 (verse no. 16); Paingalo-panishad, Canto 4, verse no.18; Niralamba; Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad.

(c) Rig Veda’s Atma-poojo-panishad; Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahman 1.

(iii) Atharva Veda’s Atmo-panishad; Mundak Upanishad, Canto 3, section 2, verse nos. 3-4, 8; Mandukya Upanishad, verse no. 2; Atharvashir Upanishad (which describes Rudra as a manifestation of Brahm); Tripadvibhuti Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph 4-6; Canto 2, paragraph nos. 1-8, 11; Canto 8, paragraph nos. 1-7; Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 3, section 2, verse no. 2-3; Atma Upanishad; Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 8, verse no. 7; Canto 9, verse nos. 7-8; Mahavakya Upanishad, verse no. 6; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 2, Canto 3, verse no. 23; Canto 5, verse nos. 61-65, 77, 79; Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 8.

(iv) Sam Veda—Maho-panishad, Canto 3, verse no. 7; Keno-panishad; Chandogya Upanishad.

According to the Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 8, the supreme entity known as Brahm has unique and apparently paradoxical characteristics enumerated in this Upanishad’s Canto 3. This makes Brahm one of its kinds, because it is impossible to duplicate them. Advaita means non-dual. Hence the Brahm that is unique and without parallel is ‘Advaita’. The Brahm that is uniform and universal, that is irrefutably and unequivocally one, and not two, inspite of the countless forms in which it has revealed itself in this creation—is ‘Advaita’. The Brahm that is both visible as well as invisible, that is here as well as there—is known as ‘Advaita Brahm’. The Brahm that is in the present as it was in the past, and would remain the same in the future—is ‘Advaita Brahm’. Such a unique, divine, incomprehensible and incomparable cosmic Consciousness is regarded by those who are wise and in the know of things as the ‘Advaita Brahm’. This Brahm is an eternal, majestic, powerful, sublime, fascinating, almighty and stupendously magnificent entity.

The metaphysical philosophy of Jiva and Ishwar or Supreme Lord being one and non-dual is explained in many Upanishads, for instance in (i) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 41-47, and Atharva Veda’s Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 77.

The Atharva Veda’s Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 77 affirms that there is basically no difference between a Jiva (the living being) and the Ishwar (the Supreme Being). To quote—“The sky element is a uniform entity that is universal and immutable because it cannot be divided or fractioned or portioned. But the same sky is given different names according to the space it occupies—for instance, it is called ‘Ghatakash’ when it is present in the vacant space of a pot, and ‘Mahakash’ when it is considered in its cosmic form that is present outside the body of the pot. And, when the pot is broken, both the forms of the sky, viz. the Ghatakash and the Mahakash, become one and the same, having no separate existence or name. Hence one concludes that the different names assigned to the sky element is basically fallacious, and has its genesis in ignorance of the fundamental truth about the sky.

Similarly, the Atma is universally the same entity; it uniformly pervades throughout the creation, both at the micro level of an individual creature, as well as the macro level at the plane of creation or world at large. Therefore, to treat the Jiva (a living being; a creature) as being separate or different from Ishwar (the Supreme Being) is an erroneous idea based on fallacious premises and ignorance of the truth.

The Atma is the same in all the creatures, and this Atma is nothing but pure consciousness that is an entity established as being divine, sublime, subtle, universal, uniform, immutable, indivisible, eternal, all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent etc. It is this same Atma that resides in the gross body of any given individual as well as in all other creatures in existence. This is the micro-level view of the Atma. At the cosmic level, it is the same Consciousness that exists at every level of creation; it is this Consciousness that is the cause of this creation, its development, growth, expansion, and its conclusion. Even after the end of one cycle of birth and death, it is this Consciousness that prevails, and then becomes the fountainhead from which the next cycle sprouts forth, and upon which it rests.

This Consciousness known as the Atma is the central pivot around which the whole wheel of creation revolves. Since the Atma is one and immutable, it is the same irrespective of the level or plane of creation in which it exists. Again, the Atma is pure consciousness and nothing else. Therefore it follows that there is no fundamental difference between the Jiva and Ishwar as both are the same ‘consciousness’ or Atma personified.

The treatment of an entity that is universally and indisputably ‘one’ and non-dual, i.e. which is never ‘two or more’, as having more than one forms or existences is indeed fallacious and extremely absurd.

Therefore, to treat the Jiva, the living being or the creature, and the Ishwar, the Supreme Being, as two distinct or separate entities is fallacious, erroneous and misconceived. This distinction or separation comes because one is not aware of the ‘truth and reality’, and is deluded to believe in the concept of duality or Dwaitya.

[Suppose we have different types of ornaments made of ‘gold’. A wise person is one who recognizes them all as ‘golden ornaments’, and not by their individual names, shapes or sizes, or even their usage. It is raw gold that has been crafted by the goldsmith into so many shapes and sizes, giving the same element known as ‘gold’ its myriad names and different market values. If ‘gold’ is removed from these ornaments, all of them lose their intrinsic value and inherent importance.

Similarly, everything in this creation—and that includes the Jiva—is a manifestation of Brahm. Since the Jiva is a living conscious entity that harbours the Atma, the pure consciousness, in its body, it has a special relationship with Brahm as the latter is the universal cosmic Consciousness that resides in each unit of creation. In other words, it is the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm that has transformed itself into the living being known as the Jiva. It is just like ‘gold’ being transformed into an ornament having a name other than ‘gold’.] (77).”

The entire creation is a reflection of one Supreme Being known as Brahm in the Upanishads. It is this single Brahm that has taken as many forms as the creation has taken. For instance, water assumes the form of the vessel in which it is contained; water does not have any specific form of its own. Another example is that of the sky—it fills all the space that is available, is invisible and imperceptible but nevertheless true. No one can actually see the sky; when we see an empty vessel we see its inner walls, but what about the space between these walls? Similarly, Brahm is present throughout creation, but no one can see it. It is a universal entity that is always present wherever there is space.

Lord Ram had earlier reiterated this fact of the universality of soul that inspires the wise and enlightened person to treat everyone alike and as an image of the Supreme Brahm in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 15.

The second point in this verse is to have great respect for saints and spiritually enlightened persons because they are the ones who have realised the presence of the Supreme Lord everywhere. Such individuals must be given the highest regards as they act as the torch-bearers of truthful knowledge of Brahm; they guide the rest of the world on the path that is correct and right. Sage Valmiki has also stressed on giving great respect to sages and saintly

people in his exposition on the places where Lord Ram should live in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, 8 that precede Doha no. 129.

Lord Ram had earlier reiterated this need for respect of elders and wise men when he preached Laxman in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 16.

The divine and glorious virtues of saints have been enumerated by Lord Ram himself in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37, to Doha no. 38. Then later on, in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 13-16, 21 that precede Doha no. 121, the crow saint Kaagbhusund also highlights the glorious virtues of saints when he preached Garud, the legendary mount of Lord Vishnu who had come to the him to remove his delusions.]

आठवँ जथालाभ संतोषा । सपनेहुँ नहिं देखइ परदोषा ॥ ४ ॥

āṭhavam̐ jathālābha santōṣā. sapanēhum̐ nahim̐ dēkha'i paradōṣā. 4.

The eighth form of Bhakti is to be perpetually satisfied and contented with whatever one has got and never yearn for more, as well as to never find faults with others even in one's dream. (4)

[Note—The state of eternal contentedness is the root of all happiness, and it comes only when one has developed true sense of renunciation from the world and its material charms as well as the desire of the sense organs for self gratification. Sage Valmiki has said in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 131 that a person who never wants anything and has genuine and true love for Lord Ram is the one in whose subtle heart the Lord takes up his divine residence.

Again, Lord Ram has told Laxman that 'Virati', or renunciation and dispassion towards the material world and the fascination of its sense objects and their sensual pleasures, is created by following the path of Dharma, and Virati in turn leads to success in Yoga (meditation and contemplation on the Absolute Truth), Gyan (realisation of this Absolute Truth), and Moksha (liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation).

Another important factor listed here is not to find fault with others. This will happen only when one becomes sufficiently enlightened to realise that the Atma that constitutes the 'real self' of the other person, as opposed to his physical body, is an immaculate and sublime entity that is free from all taints, and that it is the same as the Atma residing in the body of the enlightened person at the individual plane of existence, and when viewed from the cosmic perspective it is the Atma that pervades throughout this living world as the cosmic Consciousness. How can this universal and non-dual Consciousness that is immaculate, holy, divine and sublime be corrupt or tainted in one person and holy in another? To treat this Atma differently is the root cause of all spiritual dichotomies that create so much ill-will in this world. This arises from the erroneous conception that the gross physical body is the truthful identity of the individual instead of the Atma.

Of course, the body is unholy inasmuch as it is gross and directly in contact with the corrupt world. But then it is 'not' the truthful identity of the creature who is accused of having so many faults—for this identity is the Atma that is faultless!

No one is perfectly without fault, and therefore to say that I am holy and the other person is corrupt is nothing but pretension and haughtiness that must be avoided by a devotee on all counts.

The idea expressed in this verse is reflected in what sage Valmiki said in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line 1 that precedes Doha no. 131—"those who discard the faults of others and accept only their goodness and good virtues—the Lord should treat their Mana, or heart and mind, as his good home". The same notion applies when Valmiki further

says in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 130 that—“A true devotee is friendly towards all, and is eager to be of help to everyone. He treats sorrows and happiness alike. He always speaks the truth and pleasant words by properly giving thought to what he speaks.”]

नवम सरल सब सन छलहीना । मम भरोस हियँ हरष न दीना ॥ ५ ॥

navama sarala saba sana chalahīnā. mama bharōsa hiyaṁ haraṣa na dīnā. 5.

And finally, the ninth form of Bhakti is to be simple hearted, to be without any deception and fraud, to be free from all pretensions, deceit, conceit and wickedness of heart, to be straightforward in one's dealings with all others, to have unwavering and unflinching faith, conviction and reliance upon me (Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being) and on no body else, and not to feel either elated or depressed (under favourable or unfavourable developments and circumstances respectively, because a true devotee is one who has total faith in the Lord and relies solely upon him, who treats the good and bad happenings of the world with complete indifference and equanimity as these things are limited to affecting the gross body and have no reach till the Atma which is the 'true self' of the devotee and the pure conscious that is immaculate and pristine pure). (5)

[Note—Absence of deceit, cunning, pretensions, falsehood, wickedness and other negative traits are the signs of the true devotee of the Lord. If one does not eliminate them then he has no right whatsoever to claim that he is a devotee of Lord Ram.

Sage Valmiki has extolled these virtues in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 129 where he says that Lord Ram should live in the heart of those who ask for only reward after doing everything, and it is to have affection and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram. Then the sage follows this up by saying that Lord Ram should live in the heart of those who have vices such as Kaam (passions, lust), Krodha (anger), Mada (arrogance and hypocrisy), Maan (pride and ego), Moha (infatuations and attractions), Lobha (greed), Kshobha (regrets, sorrow, grief etc.), Raag and Droha (attachments and animosity respectively), Kapat and Dambha (deceit, conceit, pretension, falsehood, cunning, wickedness, crookedness etc.), and Maya (delusions and its attending problems)—ref: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 130.

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 16, Lord Ram told Laxman that “Oh dear, I live in the inner-self of those who have no negative traits such as Kaam, Mada, Dambha etc.” There is another way of interpreting this line as follows—“Oh dear, I am at the beck and call of those devotees who have no vices as Kaam, Mada, Dambha etc.”

As regards having complete reliance upon Lord Ram, sage Valmiki says “anyone who has taken refuge in Lord Ram's holy feet at all times, whether he is awake or asleep, and who has no other succour and destiny except Lord Ram—verily the Lord should live in his heart and mind”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 130.

The same idea is repeated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 130 in which Valmiki says “he for whom Lord Ram is the only relation that matters, he for whom Lord Ram is a friend, father, mother, guru etc.—verily, the Lord should live in the Mana or the heart and the mind of such a devotee as if this Mana is the Lord's temple.”]

नव महँ एकउ जिन्ह कें होई । नारि पुरुष सचराचर कोई ॥ ६ ॥
 सोइ अतिसय प्रिय भामिनि मोरें । सकल प्रकार भगति दृढ़ तोरें ॥ ७ ॥

nava mahum̐ ēka'u jinha kēm hō'ī. nāri puruṣa sacarācara kō'ī. 6.
 sō'i atisaya priya bhāmini mōrēm. sakala prakāra bhagati dṛṛha tōrēm. 7.

Oh Sabari! Anyone who possesses even one of these stellar forms of devotion is very dear to me, whether one is a man or a woman, or any other creature for that matter. But you have all the forms of Bhakti firmly established in your inner-being, so I am definitely pleased with you. (6-7)

[Note—Lord Ram has preached the nine forms of Bhakti to Sabari in Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas also in its Aranya Kand, Canto 10. This will be narrated in Section 2 of this book “Ram Geeta”.

The significant point to note here is that Sabari belonged to a low caste, and Lord Ram tells her that she meets all the eligibility criteria that make the Lord pleased with a creature, that entitles the creature to be eligible for special favour from Lord Ram. Therefore we deduce that the Lord is not concerned with which class the man or woman is born into; the Lord looks for purity of heart and the level of devotion he or she has to shower his compassion and grace upon that person.]

{Lord Ram's exposition on Bhakti for enlightening Sabari on this subject as narrated herein above can be summarized in the following words:-

“Lord Ram told Sabari—‘A man lacking in devotion is as worthless as a cloud without rain. Now I shall enumerate the nine types of Bhakti that pleases me; listen carefully and cherish them in your heart and mind. (1) The first is having fellowship and communion with pious saints and holy men; (2) the second is to have liking for and eagerness to hear divine stories and episodes related to my life and deeds; (3) the third form is to humbly serve the holy lotus-feet of one's Guru (moral preceptor and spiritual teacher); (4) the fourth form is to sing and emotionally submerge one's self in my divine glories and virtues; (5) the fifth form of devotion is to constantly and persistently repeat and remain engrossed and submerged in my holy and divine name, and have unflinching and steady faith and conviction in it's glory and divinity as revealed in the Vedas; (6) the sixth form is to have self restraint and inculcate noble and auspicious virtues such as humility, politeness, dignified existence, observing etiquette and social norms, to abstain from indulgences and remaining engrossed in multifarious worldly pursuits, and to diligently and honestly follow the righteous and noble path shown by and fit for saints and sages who are wise, erudite, enlightened and sagacious; (7) the next form of Bhakti, the seventh, is to see the whole creation as my image (i.e. to believe in the philosophy of non-duality), and treats saints and sages as more honourable and revered than me; (8) the eighth form of Bhakti is to be perpetually satisfied and contented with whatever one has got and never yearn for more, as well as to never find faults with others; and (9) finally the ninth form is to be simple hearted without any deception and fraud, without any deceit and imposturing, to be straightforward in one's dealings with all others, to have unwavering and unflinching faith, conviction and reliance upon me (and on no body else), and not to feel either exulted or depressed (under favourable or unfavourable circumstances, because he has reliance upon me and treats the good and bad happenings in the world with equanimity as affect the body which lives in the world and is affected by

circumstances, and not the ‘true self’ which is the pure conscious Atma). Oh Shabari! Anyone who possesses even any one of these forms of devotions is very dear to me, whether one is a man or a woman or any other creature for that matter.”]

(3.4) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-10 that precede Doha no. 43:

After providing deliverance to Sabari, Lord Ram proceeded ahead in the forest on his onward journey to Kishkindha, the monkey kingdom where, according to Sabari, he would meet Sugriv, the exiled brother of the king of the monkeys named Baali, who lived near the lake known as Pampa. The Lord should befriend him, and Sugriv would tell him more about the direction in which Sita was taken by her abductor.

So, Lord Ram reached lake Pampa, bathed in its fresh water, and felt very happy and refreshed. He was sitting relaxed when all the Gods came to pay their obeisance to him. It was then that the celestial sage Narad came to Lord Ram and bowed before the Lord reverentially. The Lord lifted him and affectionately embraced the sage. The sage politely asked the Lord to grant him a boon, and the Lord replied that there is nothing in this world that he cannot give Narad if he so wished. So Narad asked the Lord something for the welfare of the entire world—he requested the Lord that his divine and holy name, i.e. ‘Ram’, which is the supreme and the most exalted of all the holy and divine names of all the Gods, should shine majestically like a beautiful full moon amongst countless stars in the subtle sky representing the heart of all devotees in the night that is symbolized by Bhakti (devotion).

Lord Ram gladly granted Narad this boon. Then Narad bowed cheerfully in the holy feet of the Lord.

This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 41, to Doha no. 42, Kha.

After that, finding Lord Ram very pleased and in a cheerful mood, Narad asked the Lord why did he not allow him to marry when he was eager to do so if the Lord says that he is always grants all the wishes of his devotees? The answer that Lord Ram gave Narad is now narrated as the next divine discourse given by the Lord to expound upon the eclectic spiritual theme of ‘Bhakti’:

सुनु मुनि तोहि कहउँ सहरोसा । भजहिं जे मोहि तजि सकल भरोसा ॥ ४ ॥

करउँ सदा तिन्ह कै रखवारी । जिमि बालक राखइ महतारी ॥ ५ ॥

sunu muni tōhi kaha'um̐ saharōsā. bhajahim̐ jē mōhi taji sakala bharōsā. 4.
kara'um̐ sadā tinha kai rakhavārī. jimi bālaka rākha'i mahatārī. 5.

Lord Ram replied—‘Listen sage! I solemnly and very emphatically tell you, with all the emphasis that I can command¹, that I diligently care for all those who have unflinching and undivided devotion for me, and who worship me exclusively after discarding all reliance upon anyone else. Verily I say to you that I look after their welfare like a mother does for her child. (4-5)

[Note—¹It is important to take note of the word *Saharosa* (i.e. the fifth word of line no. 4. It is derived from the root word ‘Roshā’, which means to say something with indignance,

annoyance, anger or irritation. Therefore, the way Lord Ram began to answer Narad can be interpreted as follows—“Listen sage! I tell you with a bit of annoyance (as I am irritated at your foolishness and lack of maturity) that those who worship me, have devotion for me, and are completely dependent upon me for their welfare and well-being, verily I say that I protect them like a mother protects her innocent young child.”

Now, the question arises, why was Lord Ram angry or annoyed or indignant at Narad in spite of the fact that this sage is one of the greatest devotees of the Lord? There are a number of reasons for this. Some have been expounded in note to Chaupai line nos. 2-3 above.

A very long period of time has passed since Narad first desiring to marry, and now when the Lord is in the last quarter of his 14-year forest exile. Yet, the sage is still infatuated with a woman; he had no other question to ask but this silly one—why was he not allowed to marry? He is a Sanyasi, a mendicant sage who is supposed to have complete control over his base instincts and sensual desires. The very fact that Narad chose to ask this stupid question after the gap of so many years, without even thinking what impression it would create, was enough to annoy the Lord.

Another plausible reason is this: Why did Narad select this particular moment to ask the Lord about a woman when he knew that the Lord is frantically searching for his own wife Sita who had been abducted by Ravana? Did Narad wish to tease the Lord that he had prevented him (Narad) from marrying but was himself overwhelmed by grief when he lost his wife Sita? Did Narad, in his utter stupidity, not realise that the Lord had to act in the way he did (lamenting and feeling extremely heart-broken as he searched for his lost wife) because it was the sage himself who had cursed Lord Vishnu to become a human being to suffer the agony and pain that comes when one is not allowed the company of a woman he loves very much, like Narad was subjected to when the Lord did not allow him to marry the woman of his choice?

Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 137 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8 wherein it is clearly stated that “Narad cursed Lord Vishnu to take a form which he prevented the sage from taking; and since Narad’s face was made to look like a monkey, they will help the Lord when he becomes a human; and the Lord has done a great favour to him by preventing him from marrying—so the Lord will have to suffer the agony of separation from a woman (wife). Lord Vishnu had willingly accepted the curse of the sage, and had instead prayed to him to calm down.”

The spark that caused anger and indignation in the Lord was that he himself preferred to suffer by the sage’s curse instead of punishing him for violating the laws of Dharma whereby a person who has become a Sanyasi is expected to never think, talk or see a woman, the foolish sage is still lingering with his passions and lowly desires. What signal will it give to the rest of the world?

This is exactly the reason why the Lord cited the analogy of a mother protecting her child if he is harmed. It happens that the mother herself gets injured in this process—for instance, the snake will bite her, or the fire would burn her, but she prefers to suffer in her single-minded pursuit of protecting her child whom she loves dearly. The same analogy applies here—the compassionate and gracious Lord prefers to suffer himself in his eagerness to give full protection to his devotee, and here is Narad asking such impertinent and stupid question about not marrying a woman! The very fact that this question has lingered on in his mind even after so long a period is in itself a loathsome idea.

So, in the following line the Lord cites the instance of the mother who leaps to protect her child if ignorantly or inadvertently he tries to catch a blazing fire or a serpent to stress that the Lord ensures the safety of his devotees if they do something that is harmful for them. In the case of Narad it was the desire to get entangled in the numerous problems that a creature faces in this world by marrying and raising a family. It acts as a heavy shackle that keeps him tied to this mundane world endlessly, and the countless responsibilities that come in the wake of the family that he raises leaves him drained of energy and short of time to focus on ethereal matters of the Spirit. Marriage acts like a worldly trap for him, sucking him of energy and peace of mind.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99 it is emphasized that “all men are compelled to remain under the influence of women so much so that they dance to the latter’s commands and demands even as a monkey dances to the orders of the monkey charmer”.]

गह सिसु बच्छ अनल अहि धाई । तहँ राखइ जननी अरगाई ॥ ६ ॥

gaha sisu baccha anala ahi dhā'ī. taham̐ rākha'i janani aragā'ī. 6.

When a small and innocent child runs to catch hold of fire or a serpent (thinking that they are playthings, not aware that they are very dangerous and will kill him instead), the mother instantly leaps forward to pull the child away from danger. (6)

[Note—The Lord means that he also is extremely careful and vigilant that his devotees who rely upon him completely like the child is on his mother are not brought to any harm whatsoever. In the case of Narad, it was his desire to enjoy the sensual pleasures that come by marrying, but which would have been detrimental for his spiritual welfare and unfettered freedom that he now enjoys. A true devotee is like a child not only because his mind and heart are pure and free from all worldly corruptions and entanglements like that of a child, but also because he is totally dependent upon the Lord just like the little child is upon his mother.]

प्रौढ़ भएँ तेहि सुत पर माता । प्रीति करइ नहिं पाछिलि बाता ॥ ७ ॥

praur̥ha bha'ēm̐ tēhi suta para mātā. prīti kara'i nahim̐ pāchili bātā. 7.

When the little child grows up, the mother continues to love him but she is no longer so worried for his safety and well-being as when he was an infant or a small innocent child, because as an adult he is able to take care of himself better, fend for himself, and think and act for himself. (7)

मोरें प्रौढ़ तनय सम ग्यानी । बालक सुत सम दास अमानी ॥ ८ ॥

mōrēm̐ praur̥ha tanaya sama gyānī. bālaka suta sama dāsa amānī. 8.

Those who are ‘Gyanis’ (i.e. those who are known as wise, learned, self-realised and enlightened men) are like my grown-up children.

On the other hand, those who are my ardent followers and devotees who are completely dependent upon me for all their welfare and needs are like the innocent child who is completely dependent upon his mother for everything in this world (and therefore like the mother it becomes my responsibility to take meet their genuine needs, as well as to care of them and their welfare). (8)

[Note—Here, Lord Ram compares himself to the mother, and the creature as her off spring. This is indeed true because Lord Ram is the incarnate Supreme Being who is the cosmic Creator of whatever exists in this world. According to the Upanishads, the entire creation was

conceived and is nourished by the Viraat Purush, the cosmic form of Brahm, the Supreme Being. This Viraat is also known as Lord Vishnu who had manifested as Lord Ram. Vishnu is responsible for protection, sustenance and well-being of the world. So, to compare himself with the mother who conceives the child in her womb, nourishes him, and finally gives him birth is most appropriate.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 43, Lord Ram told the citizens of Ayodhya who had assembled to hear his words of wisdom that “that follower or devotee is extremely dear to me who faithfully carries out my orders and principles laid out by me (and codified as the many laws of Dharma, the laws of proper conduct and morality)”.]

जनहि मोर बल निज बल ताही । दुहु कहँ काम क्रोध रिपु आही ॥ ९ ॥

janahi mōra bala nija bala tāhī. duhu khamā kāma krōdha ripu āhī. 9.

My devotee has only my strength as he is completely reliant upon me, whereas those who have Gyan rely upon their own strength for their spiritual welfare. But both of them have common enemy—such as Kaam (worldly passions, lust, yearnings etc.) and Krodha (anger). (9)

[Note—All the worldly corruptions and vices are like the enemy of a creature. They are compared to the ‘enemy’ because they will never allow the creature to rest in peace if they are not conquered and crushed.

In this context, sage Kaagbhusund tells Garud that “Bhakti is the spiritual victory that is obtained by protecting oneself with a shield symbolized by Vairagya (deep sense of renunciation, detachment, non-involvement and dispassion), and a sword symbolized by Gyan (wisdom, enlightenment and awareness of the Truth and Reality) to fight the enemy represented by Mada (arrogance, ego, hypocrisy etc.), Lobha (greed) and Moha (worldly attachments and infatuations) and other such vices”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 120 Kha.

The countless spiritual faults that torment the innocent creature are called the *Vikaars*. They are the numerous faults, shortcomings, imperfections, drawbacks or errors and blemishes in the character of a creature that cast a shadow on the otherwise ideal, immaculate and perfect nature of the subject under consideration. These Vikaars are like the dark shadow of the earth that eclipses the bright disc of the beautiful moon during the lunar eclipse. In other words, they prevent the original beauty and shine of the subject to come to the fore by casting a dark veil of evil tendencies and traits over its surface like the case of the solar eclipse when the moon prevents the brilliant splendour of the sun from being viewed from earth by coming in between the sun and the earth during the solar eclipse.

The Varaaha Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 3, verse no. 24, asserts that the best method to get rid of the numerous Vikaars is to burn them or eliminate them as soon as they raise their head. To quote—“When worldly negative traits called the ‘Vikaars’ such as ‘Raag’ (attachments, infatuations, attractions and strong yearnings for anything or anyone in this material world) etc. are first observed to be making their appearance, and a wise man uses his discrimination and intelligence to burn (eliminate) them in their infancy, there is no scope of their developing into full blown traits (which would then be most difficult to uproot and a cause of must dismay and agony for the man later on) (24).”

The Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 14-15 stress that Gyan or truthful knowledge of the reality as well as Yoga or meditation and contemplation are the two important tools to overcome the various faults that engulf the creature and cause a hindrance in his spiritual progress. To quote—

“Verse no. 14 = [The following verses describe the ways to overcome the different faults and shortcomings enumerated above.]

Now I shall narrate to you the ways by which one can overcome the negative effects of the various faults, shortcomings, impurities and imperfections that taint the Atma. Say, how can Gyan (knowledge and wisdom) devoid of Yoga (meditation and coordination of the theoretical metaphysical knowledge with its practical spiritual application) ever be useful and successful in providing stable and permanent Moksha (emancipation and salvation, liberation and deliverance) to the creature and his soul from the torments of the trap in which the Atma has been allowed to fall due to ignorance? (14).

“Verse no. 15 = Similarly, Yoga devoid of Gyan also cannot bestow Moksha. Therefore, those desirous of obtaining Moksha (i.e. those who wish to break free from the cycle of birth and death and its attendant miseries and torments, those who wish to attain emancipation and salvation for their self) should strive to establish a synergy, a harmony between both Gyan and Yoga. That is, they should employ both Gyan and Yoga in a well coordinated and synchronized manner to reach their spiritual goal (15).”

The 19 *Vikaars* or faults—The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 10-11, lists the nineteen *Vikaars* or faults and shortcomings in the character and mental setup of the creature which prevents the latter from becoming one like the supreme Lord of creation because they act as drags on its spiritual upliftment, pulling the individual’s soul towards this mundane world rather than going higher to reach for the sky of spiritual achievement.

To quote—“Verse no. 10-11 = Some of the inherent faults, shortcomings, imperfections and drawbacks that mire the creature’s spiritual progress and pull him down from reaching the high of spiritual achievement that would make him equivalent to the supreme Soul of creation are the following—Kaam (worldly desires, lust, passions etc. and the attending greed, yearnings and aspirations that they create in their wake), Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness and a sense of vengeance when desired results are not obtained and aspirations are not fulfilled), Bhaye (fear, consternation and perplexities arising out of uncertainties, confusions and other factors such as fear from death and enemy, fear of failure and its attending shame, fear of sufferings of the body due to old age and diseases etc.), Moha (delusions that create a sense of attachment, infatuation and belonging to this material world and attractions for the illusive charms that its sense objects offer, along with their sensual pleasures and comforts), Lobha (greed, rapacity and yearnings), Mada (arrogance, false pride, hypocrisy and haughtiness), Raja (the quality of remaining engrossed in this world of material objects, to think that one is the doer of deeds and therefore is entitled to the rewards of these deeds etc.), the problems associated with the cycle of Janma and Mrityu (birth and death), Kaarpanya or Kripantaa (to be miserly and pinch-fisted, shallow-hearted and small-minded, frugal, illiberal, niggardly, avaricious, stingy), Shok (grief, sorrows, miseries and agonies of all kinds), Standra (sleepiness, lethargy, indolence, drowsiness, sluggishness and lack of alertness especially when doing some important or dangerous work requiring concentration of mind, vigilance and alertness of the faculties), Kshudha (hunger) and Pipasa (thirst) [10],-----

-----Tirshnaa (thirst for acquiring and enjoying worldly things and desire for self gratification; greed, avarice and rapacity for the material world and its sense objects and their enjoyments), Lajja (shame at doing something dishonourable and ignominious) and its attendant fear of losing face, self respect, dignity and position in society, all sorts of Dukha and Vishaad (sorrows, miseries, agonies, grieving, lamentations, feeling of gloom and guilt, melancholy, sadness, depression, dejection, low-spirited etc.), and Harsh (the opposite of Dukha and Vishaad; the feeling of elation, happiness, joy, ecstasy and exhilaration; to feel glad, cheerful and joyous).

These are the shortcomings or imperfections that cast their shadow on the otherwise immaculate and prefect Atma of the creature, thereby miring it in a number of unwarranted problems and separating it from its pure nature. Until the creature is freed from their clutches or tainting effects, he cannot ever hope to become as pure as the Shiva, i.e. the creature cannot

attain his true primary nature which is pristine pure, uncorrupt, truthful, auspicious, neutral and beautiful like the form of Shiva [11]. (10-11).”]

यह बिचारि पंडित मोहि भजहीं । पाएहुं ग्यान भगति नहिं तजहीं ॥ १० ॥

yaha bicāri paṇḍita mōhi bhajahīm. pā'ēhum' gyāna bhagati nahim tajahīm.
10.

Considering all these factors and keeping in mind the virtues of Bhakti, those who are wise and intelligent, those who know the reality and the truth, those who understand the fundamental meaning and the essence of the maxims and axioms of the scriptures—they verily prefer to have Bhakti for me (in comparison to following the path of Gyan for their spiritual welfare, to access happiness, peace and bliss, and to attain liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation).

Therefore, inspite of them having access to Gyan, i.e. though they are learned, wise, self-realised and enlightened, they never abandon Bhakti and barter it for exclusive Gyan. [In other words, inspite of having knowledge of the various other powerful and potent tools that will help them attain their spiritual goals, those who are intelligent and discriminating always rely upon Bhakti as a sure-shot and easy method to reach the same goal without the risks and hassles that are natural in the path of Gyan.] (10)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 115, till Doha no. 120, the crow-saint Kaagbhusund has elaborately described to Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, the virtues of Bhakti (devotion and love for Lord God) vis-à-vis Gyan (acquisition of wisdom, enlightenment, knowledge of the various metaphysical principles and becoming skillful in various tools that help a creature realise his spiritual objectives).

During this discourse, Kaagbhusund stresses that—

(i) to pursue Gyan at the cost of Bhakti is like not paying attention the Kaamdhenu cow (the all wish-fulfilling cow) living in one's own home and roaming around searching for milk from a swallow wort plant—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 115;

(ii) if anyone abandons Bhakti and seek spiritual happiness elsewhere, then he is absolutely stupid and block-head who wishes to cross the vast ocean without a ship—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 115;

(iii) the path of Gyan is like a double-edged sword; oh king of birds (Garud)—it does not take time to fall from this path and get mortally wounded—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 119;

(iv) by following the path of Bhakti, one is able to get freedom from his destiny that shackles a creature endlessly to this mundane world and its equally endless cycle of birth and death—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 119;

(v) Bhakti for Lord Ram is like a self-illuminated and all wish-fulfilling gem that gives eternal illumination (self-realisation, enlightenment, wisdom, peace, contentedness, bliss, happiness etc by removing the ghost of darkness) to the inner-self of the creature without the need for any artificial lamp that needs a wick or oil to keep lighted—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 120;

And (vi) if this gem-like Bhakti lives in the heart of a creature, then he does not have to suffer in the least from any kind of sorrow and grief—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precede Doha no. 120.]

(4) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand:

(4.1) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 23:

Lord Ram protects his Bhakta (i.e. the Lord's sincere and true devotee) so attentatively that no harm would ever come to him. Not even thousands of the creators known as Lord Brahma or the concluder of creation known as Lord Shiva can either harm Lord Ram's devotee or give support to anyone who is opposed to such a devotee. This warning has been given by Hanuman to the demon king Ravana.

सुनु दसकंठ कहउँ पन रोपी । बिमुख राम त्राता नहिं कोपी ॥ ७ ॥
संकर सहस बिष्नु अज तोही । सकहिं न राखि राम कर द्रोही ॥ ८ ॥

sunu dasakaṇṭha kaha'um̐ pana rōpī. bimukha rāma trātā nahim̐ kōpī. 7.
saṅkara sahasa biṣṇu aja tōhī. sakahim̐ na rākhi rāma kara drōhī. 8.

Hanuman warned Ravana, the ten-headed, and therefore the ten-necked, demon king of Lanka: 'Listen Ravana, the one with ten necks (dasakaṇṭha)! I tell you firmly under oath that no one can ever save anyone or give protection to him who is opposed to Lord Ram. [So be ware!] (7)

Even Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma in their thousands would not be able to protect you or afford to give shelter to you (if you are against Lord Ram).¹ (8)

[¹To wit, thousands of Lord Shivas, Vishnus and Brahmas, i.e. anyone in creation, no matter how powerful and authoritative he may be, cannot protect him who is inimical to Lord Ram.]

(4.2) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 46—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precede Doha no. 47:

Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, was a great Bhakta (devotee) of Lord Ram. When he came to surrender before the Lord because Ravana had castigated and humiliated him publicly when he had tried to tell his brother to come to his senses and avoid confrontation with the Lord, he was warmly welcomed by Lord Ram. During the conversation between the Lord and Vibhishan at that time, Vibhishan highlights the glory of Bhakti in the following words:

दो०. तब लगि कुसल न जीव कहूँ सपनेहुँ मन बिश्राम ।
जब लगि भजत न राम कहूँ सोक धाम तजि काम ॥ ४६ ॥

dōhā.

taba lagi kusala na jīva kahum̐ sapanēhum̐ mana biśrāma.
jaba lagi bhajata na rāma kahum̐ sōka dhāma taji kāma. 46.

Vibhishan said: ‘A living being cannot expect, even in his dream, to have any kind of peace and happiness in his mind or heart, or expect to have any kind of welfare or good, till the time he does not do Bhajan of Lord Ram (i.e. does not remember the Lord with great love and devotion) after having distanced himself from all worldly attachments and desires which are like a treasury of sorrows and miseries.

चौ०. तब लगि हृदयँ बसत खल नाना । लोभ मोह मच्छर मद माना ॥ १ ॥
जब लगि उर न बसत रघुनाथा । धरें चाप सायक कटि भाथा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

taba lagi hr̥dayam̐ basata khala nānā. lōbha mōha macchara mada mānā. 1.
jaba lagi ura na basata raghunāthā. dharēm cāpa sāyaka kaṭi bhāthā. 2.

As long as Lord Ram who holds a bow and arrow does not live in the heart of a creature, it is only till then that the mischief-creating negative qualities such as Lobh (greed, avarice, rapacity), Moha (delusions, attachments, attractions), Matsar (jealousy, envy and ill-will), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, ego, vanity etc.) find their abode in it (the heart). [It is significant to note that the Lord is shown as holding the bow and arrow here—it signifies the Lord’s readiness to destroy these negativities from the heart of his true devotees.] (1-2).

ममता तरुन तमी अँधिआरी । राग द्वेष उलूक सुखकारी ॥ ३ ॥
तब लगि बसति जीव मन माहीं । जब लगि प्रभु प्रताप रबि नाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

mamatā taruna tamī am̐dhi'ārī. rāga dvēṣa ulūka sukhakārī. 3.
taba lagi basati jīva mana māhīm̐. jaba lagi prabhu pratāpa rabi nāhīm̐. 4.

Similarly, only till the time the brilliant light of the sun representing the divine glory and holiness of the Lord does not shine in the subtle sky of the creature’s heart that darkness lives there, and this darkness is the breeding ground for the symbolic owl representing Mamtaa (passion and affection for material world), Raag and Dwesh (attachment for something and repulsion with another). (3-4).

अब मैं कुसल मिटे भय भारे । देखि राम पद कमल तुम्हारे ॥ ५ ॥
तुम्ह कृपाल जा पर अनुकूला । ताहि न व्याप त्रिबिध भव सूला ॥ ६ ॥

aba mair̥ kusala miṭē bhaya bhārē. dēkhi rāma pada kamala tumhārē. 5.
tumha kṛpāla jā para anukūlā. tāhi na byāpa tribidha bhava sūlā. 6.

Oh Lord, now that I have had the opportunity and the privilege of having a divine sight of your holy feet, all of my greatest of fears have been dispelled, and I am feeling absolutely blessed with all sorts of welfare and well-being. (5)

When the Lord becomes kind and graceful, none of the three types of torments of the world can affect the creature. [The three torments are the following—(i) Daivik—that related to malignant gods and stars, (ii) Daihik—that related to the body, such as old age related problems and so many diseases, and (iii) Bhautik—that related to the existential problems in this world, or problems created by other creatures.] (6).’

(4.3) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 48 and Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it:

When Vibhishan had bowed his head at the holy feet of Lord Ram and expressed his earnest desire to take his refuge, the Lord welcomed him and assured Vibhishan of his total acceptance. It was then the Lord gave him the reason for accepting him without reservations. It acts as welcome invitation to all the creatures to come to the Lord who is waiting for them with an open arm to give them freedom from all their miseries, torments, vexations, fears and consternations. In these verses Lord Ram has himself outlined the characteristic virtues of the devotee of the Lord as follows:

चौ०. सुनहु सखा निज कहउँ सुभाऊ । जान भुसुंड़ि संभु गिरिजाऊ ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

sunahu sakhā nija kaha'um̐ subhā'ū. jāna bhusuṇḍi sambhu girijā'ū. 1.

Lord Ram told Vibhishan—‘Listen friend! I will tell you my innate nature and temperment. It is well-known to Kaagbhusund, the saintly crow, Lord Shambhu (Shiva) and Girija (Uma or Parvati, the divine Mother and the holy consort of Shiva). (1)

[Note—It is to be noted here that the Lord has addressed Vibhishan with the word ‘friend’. He had addressed Sugriv with the same word when the two met at the Rishyamook mountain. The glorious virtues of a true friend has already been extolled by the Lord in Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede Doha no. 7 when he met Sugriv.

The Lord now reiterates his stand and assures Vibhishan that once the latter has come to surrender himself before the Lord with a sincere heart, he need not worry or fear from anything any more as it has now become the Lord’s responsibility to ensure his welfare and safety.

We will read in the Lord’s final statement in line no. 8 that he compares Vibhishan with a ‘saint’ and says that ‘saints like you are very dear to me’. Therefore we may also deduce that ‘saints’ and ‘friends’ are equally dear to Lord Ram, that all saints are friends of Lord Ram whether they are openly declared so or not, that the auspicious, the righteous, the holy and the glorious characters of all saints make them endeared to the Lord as if they were all his friends, and therefore all of them can be assured of the Lord’s unstinted support, protection, care and reciprocal affection even if they expressly request for such blessing from the Lord or not. It also simply means that all saintly people are friends of the Lord, and

therefore the Lord is duty-bound to protect and look for their welfare according to his own self-declared policy.

In his worldly play, the Supreme Being had addressed three persons as his friend—(i) one was Nishad, the chief of the boatman community—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 88; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 94; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 151; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 193 etc.,

(ii) the second is Sugriv, the chief of the monkey race—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10, 23 that precede Doha no. 7; Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 43 etc.;

and (iii) the third is Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king Ravana—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48; Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 80; Lanka Kand, Doha no. 116 Kha etc.

Lord Ram has cited three persons here who know his nature in right earnest—they are Kaagbhusund, Lord Shiva and Parvati.

(a) Kaagbhusund was well-steeped in devotion for Lord Ram and his spiritual enlightenment and level of wisdom was of such a high standard that Lord Shiva had selected him to preach Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, when the latter wished to learn about the true nature of Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 85.

The entire episode is narrated in full as the second half of Uttar Kand of Ram Charit Manas, extending from Doha no. 54 right upto to the end of the holy book in Doha no. 125.

(b) Lord Shiva is the main narrator of this divine and holy story of Lord Ram; it was conceived in his heart and mind when he was meditating upon the holy form and name of Lord Ram. Shiva had revealed it first to his divine consort Parvati or Uma, and therefore, like Kaagbhusund, she was the only one who had a first hand knowledge of this divine story and its secrets. It was on her request that Shiva had told this story in the first instance. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 30; Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 127, till Doha no. 129.

Tulsidas has clearly said that the story he is narrating is none of his own creation; it is the same story that was narrated by Lord Shiva to Parvati—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 130.]

जौं नर होइ चराचर द्रोही । आवै सभय सरन तकि मोही ॥ २ ॥

तजि मद मोह कपट छल नाना । करउँ सद्य तेहि साधु समाना ॥ ३ ॥

jauṁ nara hō'i carācara drōhī. āvai sabhaya sarana taki mōhī. 2.

taji mada mōha kapaṭa chala nānā. kara'um' sadya tēhi sādhu samānā. 3.

Even if a person is considered inimical towards the whole world which consists of animate creatures as well as inanimate things, even if he has created animosity all around himself, but still if, stricken with terror and overcome with mortal fear, comes to me to seek refuge in my holy feet (2) after having abandoned or discarding all Mada (ego, pride, arrogance and haughtiness), Moha (delusions, attractions, infatuations and attachments), Kapat and Chal (deceit, conceit, pretensions, wickedness, trickery)—then I verily say I transform him into a saintly figure (3). (2-3)

[Note—It must be noted that the Lord first converts him into a 'saintly figure' before accepting him. Or we can say that as soon as the person coming to seek Lord's grace has this thought in his mind that he will go and surrender before the Lord by throwing off his dirty

cloak symbolised by these negative traits as Mada, Moha, Kapat and Chal, he has automatically converted himself into a saintly person—which implies that his Atma, his ‘true self’ has shed its baggage of worldly taints and emerged fresh and cleaned in its original form. It is this pristine form of the Jiva, the living being, which is eligible to attain the Lord. This process of conversion from a tainted Jiva to a holy and saintly Jiva is as automatic and natural as the chasing away of the darkness of night with the arrival of dawn.

When we read elsewhere in the preaching of Lord Ram in relation with the virtues of saints we find that the taints that are listed here in line no. 3 are the first signs that are to be eliminated from the mental horizon of anyone if he ever hopes to be classified as a saint and pious person.

Earlier, Vibhishan had unilaterally declared this virtue of Lord Ram, that the Lord does not turn away even if a person is so sinful as to have made the whole world his enemy due to his misdeeds, when he was advising his brother Ravana to surrender before the Lord, return Sita to him and avoid unnecessary confrontation with the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 39.]

जननी जनक बंधु सुत दारा । तनु धनु भवन सुहृद परिवारा ॥ ४ ॥
सब कै ममता ताग बटोरी । मम पद मनहि बाँध बरि डोरी ॥ ५ ॥

jananī janaka bandhu suta dārā. tanu dhanu bhavana suhr̥da parivārā. 4.
saba kai mamatā tāga baṭōrī. mama pada manahi bām̐dha bari ḍōrī. 5.

[Now, Lord Ram goes on to describe the glorious virtues of saints which make them dear to him—]

Mother, father, brother, son, wife, body, wealth, home, friends, compatriots and other kith and kin, as well as the family (4)—a person who breaks off all his attachments and infatuations with them, who binds them all in a single rope of dispassion and detachment (i.e. who turns his mind away from them; who is no longer infatuated with them or think of them), and instead tie his Mana (i.e. his heart, mind and sub-conscious) in my holy feet (5)—(4-5)

समदरसी इच्छा कछु नाहीं । हरष सोक भय नहिं मन माहीं ॥ ६ ॥

samadarasī icchā kachu nāhīm. haraṣa sōka bhaya nahīm mana māhīm. 6.

—Who has developed exemplary equanimity and evenness of mind and views, who treats all equally and without any bias, who has no desires, hopes, aspirations and yearnings of any kind, who neither feels excited and elated nor sorrowful and depressed (simply because he practices renunciation, detachment, dispassion, self-restraint and equanimity of the highest degree), who has no fear of any kind (because he has surrendered himself to me who am the supreme Protector, and therefore he has faith that no harm can come to him from any quarter)—(6)

अस सज्जन मम उर बस कैसें । लोभी हृदयँ बसइ धनु जैसे ॥ ७ ॥

asa sajjana mama ura basa kaisēm. lōbhī hṛdayam̐ basa'i dhanu jaisēm. 7.

—Verily I say that such a gentleman finds a place in my heart like worldly wealth has in the heart of a greedy man! (7)

[Note—A wise person is one who has broken off all his attachments with these worldly entities as these relationships are temporary and unsustainable. They act like fetters for the Atma, tying it down to the gross world that revolves around and recognizes relationships that treat the gross body of the creature as his true identity instead of the Atma. The problem in this sort of relationship is that the very basis of it is gross and temporary—because both the world as well as the body of the creature are mortal and perishable. Such relationships are bound to break one day, and this will lead to the agony of separation. Besides this, such relationships act as a deep bog, ensnaring the creature for generations after generations.

The only way out of this dilemma and quandary is to recognize that the Atma is one's truthful self, and that Lord Ram is the Parmatma or the Supreme Atma which is the truthful kith and kin of the individual Atma. The Lord is the real and truthful Father of all the living beings, their true friend and companion. The Atma is pure consciousness like the Parmatma who is the cosmic supreme Consciousness. This entity is eternal and imperishable—and therefore any relationship that is established between the two, i.e. between the Atma of the individual creature and the Parmatma, will have an eternal and sustainable dimension to it.

A greedy person thinks of nothing but money and wealth; he will go to any extent in acquiring it and protecting it; he is virtually infatuated with it—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, stanza no. 1 of Doha no. 130 Kha.

Likewise, Lord Ram is always on the look-out for such persons who have saintly qualities in them, and then goes all out to welcome them and afford all his protection and benevolence to them.]

तुम्ह सारिखे संत प्रिय मोरें । धरउँ देह नहिं आन निहोरें ॥ ८ ॥

tumha sārīkhē santa priya mōrēm. dhara'um̐ dēha nahim āna nihōrēm. 8.

Saintly persons and pure souls like you are very dear to me. It is for them that I (Lord Vishnu) have assumed a form of a human being (as Lord Ram). (8)

[Note—This line clearly establishes that the Supreme Being has come down to earth for the benefit of saints and saintly people.

Lord Ram has taught Sabari about the nine virtues that a devotee of the Lord must possess in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35, till Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 36. Then again, Lord Ram has told Kaagbhusund that if a creature has devotion for him and has abandoned all deceit, conceit, pretensions and tricks, then even if his most lowly the Lord accept him willingly—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 85, till Doha no. 86.

A remarkable thing emerges if we have a close look at all the characters in the story whom Lord Ram addresses as 'friends' or 'saints' or 'devotees' whom he has cheerfully accepted in his fold. All of them are of low birth and are sinful by their bodies. (i) Nishad is a boatman who eats fish as a staple diet. (ii) Sabari is of a low caste. (iii) Sugriv is a monkey by birth, and so is (iv) Hanuman whom the Lord heaps praises with, going to the extent of saying that he will never be able to repay his debts (Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 32). (v) Vibhishan is born in the demon race. And (vi) Kaagbhusund is a crow.

This list highlights that the Lord has come down to earth to give redemption to the fallen and provide salvation to the humblest and the meekest. A healthy person does not need the care of an expert doctor or nurse; it is the sick who need it. The Lord is that spiritual doctor and nurse!]

दो०. सगुन उपासक परहित निरत नीति दृढ़ नेम ।
ते नर प्रान समान मम जिन्ह कें द्विज पद प्रेम ॥ ४८ ॥

dōhā.

saguna upāsaka parahita nirata nīti dṛṛha nēma.
tē nara prāna samāna mama jinha kēm dvija pada prēma. 48.

Those who worship my (i.e. the Supreme Being's) Saguna form (i.e. form that is visible and has attributes) {that is, those who worship Lord Ram as being an incarnation of the Supreme Being}¹, those who remain engaged in the welfare of others (instead of causing them pain and miseries)², those who are steady in observing sacraments and other religious duties along with being diligent in following the path of righteousness, propriety, morality and ethical conduct inspite of all provocations and temptations³, and those who have affection (respect) for the holy feet of Dwijis (Brahmins; elderly and learned people)⁴—verily I say that such people are as dear to me as my own life. (Doha no.48)

[Note—¹The difference between the Saguna form of the Lord and his Nirguna form (one without any specific attributes; the cosmic invisible and all-incorporating form) have been elucidated in detail by Lord Ram to preach Bharat, Hanuman and the rest in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 37, till Doha no. 41.

²The virtue of striving for the welfare of others is lauded elsewhere also—for instance, in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 14-15 that precede Doha no. 121 it is asserted that “the natural character of saints is that they endeavour or strive to do good of others and care for their welfare by employing their mind, heart and words to the best of their abilities; suffering for the good, happiness and welfare of others is a character of saints, while being the cause of pain, misery and unhappiness of others is an innate nature of non-saints.” This is the principle of a saint taught by Kaagbhusund to Garud.

³To be steadfast in following the correct path inspite of all provocations is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 46 (Lord Ram teaches Narad); Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 38 (Lord Ram teaches Bharat and others); and Lanka Kand, Doha no. 34 Kha (Angad tells Ravana).

⁴Having respect for Brahmins is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 16 (when Lord Ram has preached Laxman); and Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 38 (Lord Ram taught Bharat and others); and Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 45 (Lord Ram preaches the citizens of Ayodhya).]

{In these above referred verses, Lord Ram tells Vibhishan that he treats with great respect a person who might have the world as his enemy but has come to seek refuge with the Lord after abandoning all arrogance, attachments, deceit, cunning and pretensions, after having snapped all his relations with the world and its wealth, after renouncing his household and his near and dear ones such as his wife, his son, parents, kith and kin, friends, etc., if he has no desires and treats everything equally

and with stoic neutrality, if he has no fear, and if he is not affected by the sense of worldly happiness or sorrow—if such a man surrenders to the Lord and ties himself irrevocably to the holy feet of the Lord with a thread of devotion, love and affection, without any expectations whatsoever, the Lord promises to take care of him, whatever may come.

Those people who worship my Saguna form (i.e. my form as it appears in my incarnation), those who think of the good of others (i.e. are not selfish), those who diligently follow the rules of proper conduct and ethical behaviour as laid down in the scriptures, those who are steadfast in carrying out their duties with due sincerity, and those who love Dwij (elders and learned people)—verily, such persons are very dear to the Lord's heart.

These verses can be read as follows also—“Lord Ram advised Vibhishan: Those who detach themselves from all worldly relationships and abandon all affection for them and attachment with them, such as with one's mother, father, friend, son, wife, body, material wealth, homestead, kith and kin, compatriots and all other dear and near ones, and instead bind their Mana (mind and heart) to my holy feet (i.e. surrender before me unconditionally and completely, and treat me as their only relation in this world), those who have developed the grand virtue of equanimity and forbearance, who treat everything and everyone alike, who have no desires or expectations whatsoever, those who remain unruffled and unmoved by either happiness or sorrows, those who have no fear of any kind in their heart (obviously because they have me, the Supreme Lord, as their protector and saviour)—verily I say that such persons (devotees) are very close to my heart and dear to me much like material wealth is very dear and close to the heart of a greedy and selfish man.”

The extent to which Lord Ram loves his devotees is expressed clearly in the aforesaid verses by the Lord himself to Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana, when he came to seek refuge with the Lord.}

(5) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand:

(5.1) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 117:

दो०. मुनि जेहि ध्यान न पावहिं नेति नेति कह बेद ।
 कृपासिंधु सोइ कपिन्ह सन करत अनेक बिनोद ॥ ११७ (क) ॥
 उमा जोग जप दान तप नाना मख ब्रत नेम ।
 राम कृपा नहिं करहिं तसि जसि निष्केवल प्रेम ॥ ११७ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

muni jēhi dhyāna na pāvahiṁ nēti nēti kaha bēda.
 kṛpāsindhu sō'i kapinha sana karata anēka binōda. 117 (a).
 umā jōga japa dāna tapa nānā makha brata nēma.
 rāma kṛpā nahīṁ karahiṁ tasi jasi niṣkēvala prēma. 117 (b).

Lord Shiva tells his consort Parvati: “Oh Uma, listen. Lord Ram is not pleased by other spiritual pursuits such as doing Yoga (meditation), Japa (repetition of holy formulas), Daan (making charity), Tapa (austerity and penance), and various types of Yagyas (fire and other religious sacrifices) as much as he is pleased by the single pursuit of pure and selfless ‘love’ for the Lord God (i.e. with Bhakti).”

(6) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand:

(6.1) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 5-16 that precede Doha no. 14:

Lord Shiva prayed to Lord Ram at the time of the latter’s coronation on the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya when the Lord returned from his fourteen-year forest exile. During the course of this prayer, Lord Shiva has listed the virtues of true Bhaktas (devotees) of the Lord, and how do those who do not have Bhakti (devotion and love) for the Lord God suffer in life, as well as what the rewards of having Bhakti are. Primarily these verses reiterate that one is miserable and surrounded by grief only till the time one does not have steady and robust love and devotion for Lord Ram, and do not completely surrender in the holy feet of the Lord. This is the only path towards true happiness and peace.

महि मंडल मंडन चारुतरं । धृत सायक चाप निषंग बरं ॥ ५ ॥

मद मोह महा ममता रजनी । तम पुंज दिवाकर तेज अनी ॥ ६ ॥

mahi maṇḍala maṇḍana cārutarām. dhr̥ta sāyaka cāpa niṣaṅga barām. 5.
mada mōha mahā mamatā rajanī. tama puñja divākara tēja anī. 6.

Oh Lord! You are like the best and awesome ornamentation of this creation (i.e. it is you who gives this creation its charm and attractiveness for which it is so famous; the creation would lose its meaning and substance without you because you are the soul of this creation; nothing and no one is better than you).

Your beauteous form holds a bow, an arrow and a quiver. (5)

For the purpose of destroying (vanquishing; eliminating) the dark foreboding night symbolized by the negative qualities of ‘Mada’ (vanity, false pride, ego, haughtiness, arrogance, hypocrisy), ‘Moha’ and ‘Mamta’ (attractions, infatuations, attachments with the world and its sense objects), you are like the brilliant light of the sun. [Just as the sun-light immediately removes all darkness, your mere presence is sufficient to get rid of these dark traits in a creature.] (6)

मनजात किरात निपात किए । मृग लोग कुभोग सरेन हिए ॥ ७ ॥

हति नाथ अनाथनि पाहि हरे । बिषया बन पावँर भूलि परे ॥ ८ ॥

manajāta kirāta nipāta ki'ē. mrga lōga kubhōga sarēna hi'ē. 7.
hati nātha anāthani pāhi harē. biṣayā bana pāvam̐ra bhūli parē. 8.

The hunter represented by 'Kaam' (lust and passions) have killed (conquered and subdued) the deer representing all the creatures of this world by hitting it with an arrow symbolized by 'Bhog' (desire for gratification of the sense organs; the desire to enjoy the world of material things). (7)

Oh Lord! Oh Hari (one who removes all sorts of negativity and misery)! Kill that hunter ('Kaam') and save the foolish and vile creatures of this world who are tormented by him. [The creatures are deemed to be 'foolish' because they allow themselves to be trapped in the snare laid by worldly delusions, and they are 'vile' because they commit so many grave sins that their redemption is only possible by the intervention of the Lord.] (8)

बहु रोग बियोगन्हि लोग हए । भवदंघ्रि निरादर के फल ए ॥ ९ ॥
भव सिंधु अगाध परे नर ते । पद पंकज प्रेम न जे करते ॥ १० ॥

bahu rōga biyōganhi lōga ha'ē. bhavadaṅghri nirādara kē phala ē. 9.
bhava sindhu agādha parē nara tē. pada paṅkaja prēma na jē karatē. 10.

The people are tormented by countless moral diseases as well as misery and grief that are caused by separation (here meaning 'death' because it causes separation not only from one's dear ones but also from the world which the 'foolish and vile' creature thinks belongs to him, and to which it clings greedily). All this is due to the insult caused by them to your holy feet—that is, it is due to the fact that the creatures have turned away from you and your devotion, and instead have got indulgent in the affairs of the perishable, mortal and mundane world of sense objects, something that cannot give them peace and happiness even in their imagination, but only causes sufferings and grief. (9)

Verily indeed and in all sooth, those who have no devotion for your holy feet fall into an ocean represented by this deluding world consisting of an endless cycle of miseries and grief as well as birth and death (10)

अति दीन मलीन दुखी नितहीं । जिन्ह के पद पंकज प्रीति नहीं ॥ ११ ॥
अवलंब भवत कथा जिन्ह के । प्रिय संत अनंत सदा तिन्ह के ॥ १२ ॥

ati dīna malīna dukhī nitahīm. jinha kēm pada paṅkaja prīti nahīm. 11.
avalamba bhavanta kathā jinha kēm. priya santa ananta sadā tinha kēm. 12.

Truly, those who have no devotion in your holy feet, are subjected to regular agony, are extremely unfortunate, and are endlessly sad and sorrowful. (11)

On the other hand, those who find your divine stories interesting and rely upon them to derive happiness, joy, peace and bliss find solace in the company of saints and righteous people (because here they can hear about you and your divine stories instead of worldly talks). (12)

[To wit, foolish people find a sense of false joy in the company of worldly people where things are talked about concerning the world which is a treasury of sorrows and grief. But in their ignorance such people do not realise that they are only wasting their time in illusionary happiness that is superficial and short-lived. On the

other hand, those who are wise and enlightened spend their time in the company of saintly people where your divine stories and all matters pertaining to the elevation of the soul are discussed and talked about. It is an old adage that “a man becomes like the company one keeps”; so how can the former expect to get eternal spiritual peace in the wrong company?

नहिं राग न लोभ न मान मदा । तिन्ह कें सम बैभव वा बिपदा ॥ १३ ॥
एहि ते तव सेवक होत मुदा । मुनि त्यागत जोग भरोस सदा ॥ १४ ॥

nahim rāga na lōbha na māna madā. tinha kēm sama baibhava vā bipadā. 13.
ēhi tē tava sēvaka hōta mudā. muni tyāgata jōga bharōsa sadā. 14.

Such people (who keep good company and have devotion for you, those who have surrendered themselves at your holy feet and adore you) have no negativities as ‘Raag’ (attachments, infatuations), ‘Lobha’ (greed, avarice, rapacity), ‘Maan’ (false pride, ego, vanity), and ‘Mada’ (arrogance, haughtiness) in them. They treat good fortunes and misfortunes equally (i.e. they have developed, nurtured and inculcated the grand virtue of equanimity, neutrality and dispassion in them). (13)

Wise sages prefer to have devotion and affection for you instead of pursuing Yoga (meditation) to attain their spiritual goals (because the path of ‘Bhakti’ or devotion is far easier and convenient as compared to the path of Yoga)¹. (14)

[¹Even the Vedas has affirmed this fact in their prayer in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 13.]

करि प्रेम निरंतर नेम लिएँ । पद पंकज सेवत सुद्ध हिएँ ॥ १५ ॥
सम मानि निरादर आदरही । सब संत सुखी बिचरंति मही ॥ १६ ॥

kari prēma nirantara nēma li'ēm̃. pada paṅkaja sēvata sud'dha hi'ēm̃. 15.
sama māni nirādara ādarahī. saba santa sukhī bicaranti mahī. 16.

Such saintly people develop deep devotion and intense affection for you, and serve your holy feet and remember you constantly, always repeating your holy name with a pure and clean heart (which is un-corrupt, unpretentious, are free of delusions, free from all conceit and deceit). (15)

They treat insult and praise equally, with stoic indifference, and thereby roam on this earth peacefully and cheerfully (without feeling hurt and emotionally upset by such insults and harsh words uttered against them—for they leave it upon you to punish their tormentors, and also because they know that such people are fools of the highest order who are best neglected and left aside). (15-16)

(6.2) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Doha no. 38:

Once again, the qualities of true Bhaktas or devotees of the Lord God are highlighted by Lord Ram when he lists the stellar virtues of pious and holy souls who are called ‘saints’, because a devotee of the Lord God is surely a saintly person.

संतन्ह कै महिमा रघुराई । बहु बिधि बेद पुरानन्ह गाई ॥ २ ॥

santanha kai mahimā raghurā'ī. bahu bidhi bēda purānanha gā'ī. 2.

Bharat said to Lord Ram, ‘Oh merciful Lord! The numerous great and eclectic virtues and divine qualities of ‘Sants’—i.e. saints and saintly people, those persons who are virtuous, noble, pious and holy, those whose hearts and mind are pure, those who have risen above the grossness of this mudane world and realized the truth of existence, those who have good virtues as their dominant character, those who are the torch-bearers of the principles laid down in the scriptures, those whose lives are exemplary and worthy of emulation—have been described, enumerated and expounded in a variety of ways in the scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans. (2)

[Note—Lord Ram is addressed as ‘Raghu-raai’, meaning ‘a king of the Raghu dynasty’. The address of a ‘king’ implies that since you are a king, it is ordained upon you to teach the virtues of goodness to your all your subjects and citizens. That is why the words ‘Jana Sukha-dai’ have been used to address Lord Ram in Chaupai line no. 1 above. These two words literally mean ‘the Lord who gives happiness to his subjects’.]

श्रीमुख तुम्ह पुनि कीन्हि बड़ाई । तिन्ह पर प्रभुहि प्रीति अधिकाई ॥ ३ ॥

śrīmukha tumha puni kīnhi baṛā'ī. tinha para prabhuhi prīti adhikā'ī. 3.

Even you have often praised them, and their auspicious nature and honourable qualities with your own holy mouth¹. You have great affection for them, are favourably inclined towards them, and are especially pleased with them. (3)

[Note—¹The word ‘Sri-Mukha’ has two parts: ‘Sri’ meaning one who is honourable and revered, and ‘Mukha’ meaning the mouth. Hence, this word literally means the mouth of someone who is honourable and revered. The word spoken by such a person is said to be holy and well-respected. Lord Ram is an incarnate Supreme Being, and hence whatever he says is indeed holy and well-respected.

The word ‘Sri’ is usually employed as a mark of great respect for those who are wise and respected. It is also a metaphor for wealth as it is one of the many names of goddess Laxmi, the patron deity of material prosperity and wealth. Anyone who teaches is deemed to be a treasury of knowledge, wisdom, erudition and sagacity—noble virtues which are equivalent to worldly treasures. Since Lord Ram is poised to elucidate about the grand virtues of saints, and since these words of wisdom are no less spiritually important than pearls and gems of priceless value, the Lord’s mouth from which such words would emerge is compared to ‘Sri’—a treasure trove of spiritual wealth!

When Lord Ram begins to teach the glorious virtues and divine characters of saints and those who are pious and spiritually evolved, it will be equivalent to opening of the door of spiritual treasury for everyone to grab by the fistful, ‘by the mindful’ so to say—because good advice and wisdom is accepted by the mind and not by the physical body, and this

treasure is stored in the mind so that it can be retrieved whenever needed by one during the course of his life as a source for guidance and advice.]

सुना चहउँ प्रभु तिन्ह कर लच्छन । कृपासिंधु गुन ग्यान बिचच्छन ॥ ४ ॥

sunā caha'um' prabhu tinha kara lacchana. kṛpāsindhu guna gyāna bicacchana. 4.

I want to hear about them. Oh kind Lord! You are an ocean of all good virtues and a treasure trove of right knowledge and wisdom. [In other words, you will be able to properly enumerate them for me, and what you say will bear a stamp of authority.] (4)

[Note—The grand and magnificent virtues of ‘Sants’ (saints) have been expounded in detail at a number of places in the scriptures elsewhere also.

A brief list is as follows—

(a) *Adhyatma Ramayan* of sage Veda Vyas, Aranya Kand, canto 3, verse no. 37-39, describes the characteristics of a truly pious and holy person.

(b) Goswami Tulsidas’ *Ram Charit Manas*, in the following assorted places—(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 2; (ii) Baal Kand, Doha no. 3 and Chaupai line nos. 5-12 that precede it; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7; (iv) Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 45, till Doha no. 46; (v) Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 13-16 that precedes Doha no. 14; (vi) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 37, to Doha no. 38; (vii) Doha no. 46 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precedes Doha no. 46.

(c) Goswami Tulsidas’ *Vairagya Sandipani*—verse no. 8-33.

(d) In the *Upanishads* also, there are numerous instances when the eclectic qualities and grand auspicious virtues of saintly, holy and pious people are enumerated. Some of the examples are the following—(i) Shatyani Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, verse no. 19, 25; (ii) Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Cantos 1, Section 1-2; (iii) Sanyas Upanishad of Sam Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 1, 55-57, 60; (iv) Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Sam Veda, Canto 1, verse nos. 4-6; Canto 2, verse no. 1; (v) Kaivalya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 2.]

संत असंत भेद बिलगाई । प्रनतपाल मोहि कहहु बुझाई ॥ ५ ॥

santa asanta bhēda bilagā'ī. pranatapāla mōhi kahahu bujhā'ī. 5.

Oh Lord who cares for those who have taken shelter with thee! Tell me the different virtues, attributes, qualities and nature of saints and non-saints in such a comprehensive way that a clear distinction can be made between the two of them (i.e. between the saints and non-saints), and I can properly understand them without any ambiguity.’ (5)

[Note—The last word ‘Bujhaai’ means to explain things in such a way that the listener fully understands them, and has no ambiguity about them.]

संतन्ह के लच्छन सुनु भ्राता । अगनित श्रुति पुरान बिख्याता ॥ ६ ॥

santanha kē lacchana sunu bhrātā. aganita śruti purāna bikhyātā. 6.

[Then Lord Ram enumerated the grand positive virtues of saints so that not only is the query of Bharat satisfied but such knowledge can also help others to be enlightened about them. The Lord then goes on to describe the negative qualities of non-saints. This helps to bring into focus the difference between the two types of persons: the saints and the non-saints. The contrast between the characters of the two becomes very evident. It helps a person to determine with whom to have relations in life and whom to avoid; or whom to follow as an ideal and whom to neglect in life.]

The Lord said—‘Listen brother. The auspicious and divine virtues of saints are countless (i.e. it is not possible to list them all here, but still I’ll tell you the main ones), and they are famed in the scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans. (6)

[Note—Bharat asked the Lord to tell him the virtues and characteristic qualities of saints and non-saints in a comprehensive manner. The Lord therefore stresses that it will take an independent tome to enumerate all the virtues and glorious characters of them if one were to list all of them and explain all of them exhaustibly. So it will be better to outline only the salient features at present. Bharat must realise this therefore, and should not think that the salient features or important virtues that the Lord was about to narrate to him are all there is to it. There are countless more of them, but if one becomes aware of the important ones he can automatically get an idea of what the rest would be based on common sense. The auspicious virtues enumerated herein now act as the basis or foundation for the rest of the virtues which are not expressly mentioned here as they are more like off-shoots of the primary ones which are enumerated now.]

संत असंतन्हि कै असि करनी । जिमि कुठार चंदन आचरनी ॥ ७ ॥
काटइ परसु मलय सुनु भाई । निज गुन देइ सुगंध बसाई ॥ ८ ॥

santa asantanhi kai asi karanī. jimi kuṭhāra candana ācaranī. 7.
kāṭa'i parasu malaya sunu bhāī. nija guna dē'i sugandha basāī. 8.

The difference between a saint and a non-saint is like the relationship between an axe and sandalwood. The axe tries to cut and harm the sandalwood tree, but the latter is so kind and gracious that it lends its sweet fragrance to its cutter, the axe. (7-8)

[Note—The axe has the natural habit of cutting trees; to ‘cut’ is the axe’s job; it’s natural to it. It can’t act otherwise. On the other hand, the sandalwood has the natural habit of lending its sweet fragrance to anything that comes in contact with it—it’s its natural habit.

Both of them, the axe and the sandalwood, act according to their natural and inborn temperament and instincts. The merciless axe always harms the sandalwood tree by cruelly cutting it into pieces, while the sandalwood is so forgiving, tolerant and graceful that instead of cursing the axe and vowing vengeance against it, it lends its sweet fragrance to the latter as a token of a welcome gift.

Likewise, true saints are always forgiving, tolerant, calm, understanding, merciful and gracious, spreading their goodness all around them like the sandalwood that spreads its fragrance wherever it is present. On the other hand, the non-saint is a cause of torments and miseries wherever he is, irrespective of whether or not he has anything to gain by harming or

causing pain to others. This fundamental difference in attitude sums up the difference between a saint and a non-saint.]

दो०. ताते सुर सीसन्ह चढ़त जग बल्लभ श्रीखंड ।
अनल दाहि पीटत घनहिं परसु बदन यह दंड ॥ ३७ ॥

dōhā.

tātē sura sīsanha caṛhata jaga ballabha śrīkhaṇḍa.
anala dāhi pīṭata ghanahim parasu badana yaha daṇḍa. 37.

[Though the sandalwood does not curse the axe, but Mother Nature does not spare the axe from being punished. How? This is explained now.]

The sandalwood retains its fragrance and is used as an offering to the fire sacrifice and for other auspicious needs, but the face (cutting edge) of the axe is put in the fire and beaten by a heavy hammer to sharpen its edge. (Doha no. 37).

[Note—In spite of being deformed and dismembered, the cut pieces of the sandalwood tree are regarded fit and holy to be used in fire sacrifices. This is an exception—because normally anything that is cut and injured is deemed unholy and unfit for this purpose as it is regarded as polluted. Even when animal sacrifices were done in ancient times, a sacrificial animal was closely examined for any physical deformities, as only a healthy and perfect sample was deemed fit for offering as sacrifice during the rituals. These virtually ‘injured (cut) pieces’ of the sandalwood which should have been deemed unfit for offering to the sacrificial fire are instead used willingly. This is tantamount to Mother Nature praising it for its goodness and virtuous character of forgiveness and tolerance.

As opposed to the sandalwood, the axe is put in blazing fire and hammered hard to sharpen its edges each day after the daily grind of cutting trees. It is a metaphoric way of severely punishing it.

There is another interpretation of this example of the sandalwood and the axe. The sandalwood tree gives out more intense fragrance when it is cut. This is due to effusing of sweet fragrant sap when the tree and its branches are cut. The tree is located at a single place, but the pieces that are cut from it are taken to different places where they spread their fragrance. This is a metaphoric way of saying that saints are able to influence a large section of society in spite of their remaining at one place.

But the irony is that the axe, which comes directly in the contact of the sandalwood and is fortunate to get its fragrance and sap smeared on its surface, gets put in the fire and beaten mercilessly. It never benefits from this holy contact. Thus, non-saints are so unfortunate that even if they have the good fortune of being in direct touch of great saints, they are unable to benefit from this luck, and continue to suffer in this world and heaped with ignominy.

Tulsidas’ another classical work known as the ‘Dohawali’ has verse that uses a metaphor to describe the difference between a saint and a non-saint by using the metaphor of the birds known as Chakor and Chakva as follows—

Goswami Tulsidas’ Dohawali, Doha no. 194—

रघुबर कीरति सज्जननि सीतल खलनि सुताति ।
ज्यों चकोर चय चक्कवनि तुलसी चाँदनि राति ॥

‘Raghubar kirati sajjanani sital khalani sutaati, jyom chakor chaya chakkavani tulsi chaandani raati’.

“The full moon night is a provider of comfort, solace, peace and joy to the bird called Chakor, while it is tormenting for the bird called Chakva¹.

Similarly, Tulsidas says that the glories, the fame and the divine stories of Lord Sri Ram provide peace, tranquility, happiness and joy to good people (gentlemen; those who are pure and gentle at heart, those who are pious, holy, noble and spiritually inclined), but the holy name of the Lord and his divine stories (or any talk about him and even the mention of him) creates torments, annoyance, irritation and heart-burn among miscreants and evil people.”

The Chakva is the ruddy goose or an ostrich. The Chakor is the Indian red-legged partridge. The same light of the full moon appears to torment the Chakva while it pleases the Chakor. The Chakor feels happy at the sight of the moon, while the Chakva shuns it.

These two birds are used as metaphors to describe how the divine stories of Lord Ram—and for that matter any thing related to spiritualism—is liked by saintly and noble people, but abhorred by non-saintly and wicked people. It also emphasizes how the same story is interpreted differently by these people.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 16 says—“Lord Sri Ram manifested in this world like the full moon coming up in the eastern horizon to give happiness to saintly people and act like the frost or snow for the lotus flower symbolizing those who are wicked and evil.” The same lotus blooms when it sees the full moon in an ordinary night, but it shrivels and dies when the same moon rises in a night that is biting cold, when there is frost and it begins to snow.

In the present context it means that the same story of Lord Ram gives immense pleasure and spiritual comfort to those who are noble and saintly, while tormenting and annoying those who are evil and wicked.

Evil, sinful, pervert and wicked people have a natural tendency to see the wrong side of everything. They are compared to the bird Chakva which is angry when the full moon rises on the horizon because it torments this bird. While this moon is welcomed by the rest of the creatures, this is the only bird which abhors it, hates it, and treats the full moon with utter disdain and contempt.

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 64 says “cool (good, pleasant) advice that should have been soothing and comforting (for Sita) appeared to torment her like the fire of hell just as the case of the Chakva which feels extremely unhappy and agitated during the night of the full moon of the Sharad Purnima (though this moon provides comfort, peace, solace and happiness to the rest of the world)”.

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 1, Lord Shiva tells his divine consort Uma that—“Lord Ram’s divine glories and eclectic qualities are extremely sublime, and are very mysterious and enigmatic—i.e. they are not easily understandable by all. While saints and wise people who hear them and do understand them develop spiritual wisdom and the virtue of renunciation, those who are of low and corrupt intellect, those who are opposed to the Lord and have no spiritual inclination or desire to follow the righteous path of Dharma (proper thought and noble intentions in life) prick holes in it and twist the story to suit their vested interests. They therefore get sucked in the endless vortex of delusions and confusions, while the saintly people find liberation and deliverance from the same story.”

For instance, saintly persons find in the story the nectar-like message of the importance of having devotion and submission for the Lord as an easy means of attaining spiritual emancipation and salvation; they analyse the different aspects of the story and pick up gems of spiritual wisdom and countless advices for leading a life that is auspicious, righteous, noble and holy; they read the story and hear it being told as a tool for obtaining peace, solace, succour and comfort for their mind and heart.

The wicked people and those with pervert mind find countless faults in it and point out so many taints in the character of Lord Ram. They treat it as some fictional writing which is meant to entertain.]

चौ०. विषय अलंपट सील गुनाकर । पर दुख दुख सुख सुख देखे पर ॥ १ ॥

caupāṭi.

biṣaya alampaṭa sīla gunākara. para dukha dukha sukha sukha dēkhē para. 1.

Saints and pious people do not get indulgent, engrossed and entangled in the material objects of the senses in the world and their temptations of pleasure and comfort. They are a treasury of politeness and good virtues. They feel sorrowful and miserable at the sorrows and miseries of others, and delighted at seeing others happy. (1)

[Note—The word ‘Vishaya’ refer to the charms and temptations of the objects of the senses in the material world. This concept is closely related to another spiritual fault—known as ‘Vasana’ which refers to the desire of the sense organs for self gratification and yearning to derive pleasure and comfort from their respective objects in the external world. Thus, not to be entangled in these things is one of the main signs of saints.

Does it mean that one should run away from the world, when it is said in the scriptures that this world is governed by the law of Karma—i.e. as long as one lives in this world he must do something to survive as well as to chalk out a path for his future. The trick is to continue doing deeds and maintain one’s stable position in the world that has come to a person’s share, but to remain neutral and dispassionate towards everything in this mundane and mortal world, not to get emotionally and sentimentally involved in or attached with anything, to do everything to the best of one’s ability without worrying for the result and then offering both the deed as well as its consequences as an offering to the Lord God, and so on and so forth. If one is able to successfully lead a life in this exalted way then it is as good as actually and physically renouncing it and becoming a hermit. There is no need to make the body suffer by the hardships of the forest if one can remain in the household in the physical terms but remain detached from all temptations of the world and the sense organs internally at the mental and emotional plane.

To have sympathy and empathy are another two virtues a saint possesses. Since he is merciful, compassionate and loving, since he sees his Lord in each living being, since he is enlightened and realised enough to see the same Atma (soul) in all the creatures, these virtues come to him naturally. This fact is endorsed in the next line.]

सम अभूतरिपु बिमद बिरागी । लोभामरष हरष भय त्यागी ॥ २ ॥

sama abhūtaripu bimada birāgī. lōbhāmarāṣa harāṣa bhaya tyāgī. 2.

They maintain poise and equilibrium of mind and thoughts so much so that they have practice exemplary level of equanimity, neutrality, dispassion, a sense of evenness and detachment along with the grand virtues of forbearance and tolerance. They treat all the creatures and things equally, with stoic indifference. They do not treat anyone as a friend nor someone else as an enemy. [Since they treat everyone alike, naturally such a person has no enemy, as all are his friend.]

They are free from the negative quality of Mada (ego, pride, arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy and vanity). They, on the other hand, have an abundance of the positive virtue of Vairagya (renunciation). They abandon Lobha (greed), Krodha

(anger), Harsha (feeling of joy from worldly gains) and Bhaya (fear from anything related to this mundane gross existence). (2)

[Note—Obviously, when a person practices exemplary equanimity, neutrality and detachment on the one hand, and treats everyone, everything and every situation alike, there is no occasion for such negative traits as listed in this verse to ever find a foothold in his mind, sub-conscious and heart.

When a man has no ‘Mada’ he will be humble, polite, simple, readily approachable and affable. Since he treats everyone alike, he has no enemy or friend. Since he has no enemy, he has no ‘Bhaya’. Since he practices ‘Vairagya’ (i.e. has renounced everything and all sorts of attachments and infatuations), he has no ‘Lobha’. Since he has no ‘Lobha’, he is eternally contented. All these go together to make him free from ‘Krodha’ and ‘Haraha’ because the former (Krodha) arises when a person’s desires are not fulfilled or when his ego is hurt, and the latter (Harsh) arises in the opposite situation. Practice of equanimity takes care of them both.]

कोमलचित दीनह पर दाया । मन बच क्रम मम भगति अमाया ॥ ३ ॥

kōmalacita dīnanha para dāyā. mana baca krama mama bhagati amāyā. 3.

Their mind and sub-conscious as well as their nature are extremely supple, mild, tender, affable and calm. They have mercy, sympathy, empathy and compassion for the lowly and the humble, for those who suffer and are miserable.

They have the purest form of Bhakti (devotion, dedication, submission) for me, and their mind and heart, their words and their deeds are all dedicated in this direction. They are free from the influences of Maya (delusions pertaining to this world and its temptations that are entangling for the soul). (3)

[Note—Those who feel the pain of others, and empathize with other creatures and their sufferings, naturally have a compassionate, merciful and tender mind. It is a character of saints—refer also Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 2 where it is said that sage Narad was filled with pity and mercy for Jayant when he saw his miserable condition. The incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 1, till Doha no. 2. It so happened that Jayant, the son of Indra, ran from one god to another god seeking protection against an arrow shot at him by Lord Ram for a grave mischief he had committed. Jayant had bitten Sita and made her bleed. No one gave him any protection against the wrath of the Supreme Lord, but when sage Narad saw his pitiful condition he felt mercy for him. This is because Narad was a ‘saint’. He advised Jayant to go and ask Lord Ram for forgiveness, which is the only method for his safety now.

The concept of ‘Bhakti’ (devotion, dedication, submission and love for the Lord God) has been elaborately described in Ram Charit Manas at countless places. Some of them are the following—

(i) Ayodhya Kand: 2/93/6; 2/131/5-6; 2/137/1; 2/204; 2/219/4-5; 2/265/3; 2/291/1-3; 2/299/203; 2/301/3.

(ii) Aranya Kand: 3/16/2-9; 3/35/7—3/36/7.

(iii) Kishkindha Kand: 4/12/1-2; 4/15/10.

(iv) Sundar Kand: 5/46/1-4, 6—5/46; 5/48/1-7—5/48.

(v) Uttar Kand: 7/14/5-16; 7/46/3; 7/86/1—7/87 Ka; 7/115/11-16; 7/116/1-8—7/120; 7/122/15-19.

In 'Tulsidas' collection of verses known as Dohawali, a number of verses are dedicated to the the theme of Bhakti—for instance, refer to verse nos. 53-54, 87-88, 126-127, 134-140, 145, 147.

The renowned version of Veda Vyas' Ramayan, known as 'Adhyatma Ramayan', describes Bhakti in its Aranya Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 37-39, and in Uttar Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 60-72.

The Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 8, paragraph nos. 12-14 describes Bhakti in a metaphysical perspective.]

सबहि मानप्रद आपु अमानी । भरत प्रान सम मम ते प्रानी ॥ ४ ॥

sabahi mānaprada āpu amānī. bharata prāna sama mama tē prānī. 4.

They honour everyone else and show respect to them, but do not like being honoured and shown undue importance for themselves. Oh Bharat, they are extremely dear to me as if they are my life. (4)

बिगत काम मम नाम परायन । सांति बिरति बिनती मुदितायन ॥ ५ ॥

सीतलता सरलता मयत्री । द्विज पद प्रीति धर्म जनयत्री ॥ ६ ॥

bigata kāma mama nāma parāyana. sānti birati binatī muditāyana. 5.
sītalatā saralatā mayatrī. dvija pada prīti dharma janayatrī. 6.

They have no desires, wishes, yearnings, passions and lust whatsoever, and therefore no need to fulfill them. They are devoted to my (Lord Ram's) holy name.

[That is, they remember the Lord at all times in their lives, and silently repeat is divine name constantly. It helps them to ward off evil thoughts from entering their minds. They have eliminated all worldly desires and wants, because only when this is brought into practice can one turn himself to the thoughts of the Lord God. The mind and the heart can't do these two things simultaneously; it's either the world or the Lord.]

They are an abode of the eclectic virtues of Shanti (peace, tranquility, serenity), Virati (Vairagya=renunciation, detachment and dispassion), Binati (humility and simplicity), Mudit (cheerfulness, happiness and blissfulness under all circumstances), Sital (calm, self-controlled), and Saral (simple, without pretensions and deceit), Mayatri (friendly).

[Turning away from the world and its temptations automatically makes the mind calm and tranquil. The perceptions of the world have a buffeting affect on the mind and the sub-conscious, and as long as the creature continues to remain indulgent in the world of material sense objects, the mind is constantly pulled in that direction. Then there is the associate problem of the constant nagging of the sense organs of the gross body which is directly related to the equally gross world; they are coparceners in the joint family setup. The Atma of the creature, i.e. the creature's 'true self', is an independent entity, and as long as this Atma allows its self to be under bondage of either of them—the body consisting of the sense organs, and the world of material objects—the creature cannot ever hope to find peace, bliss and happiness. As long as

the Atma remains attached to the body and the world, it is affected by their grossness; and when it frees its self from both of them, i.e. when it gains 'Virati', it regains its primary form which is ethereal, subtle and sublime, a form that is characterized by the grand and eclectic virtues of Binati, Mudit, Sital and Saral.]

They have affection for the feet of Brahmins¹—i.e. they respect those who are elderly, learned and wise in the society.

They are the ones who support, enhance, protect, propagate, and in general act as the crucible that fosters and encourages the grand and glorious virtues of Dharma (righteous and auspicious laws of Nature and God; the tenets of propriety, probity, ethics, morality and nobility in thoughts and conduct). (5-6)

[Note--¹This word *Brahmin* is too often misunderstood and misinterpreted to mean a particular member of the society who is supposed to be given respect, no matter what his moral and educational standard is. The real intention is not that even a corrupt, unwise, morally depraved and foolish person should be honoured just because he is born a 'Brahmin'. The intention of the scriptures is never this. In ancient times this was the class of people who were designated to study the scriptures and act as moral and practical guide to the rest of the society. This was envisioned by our ancestors to help regulate the functioning of the society in an orderly manner by dividing the entire working into four clear segments and delineating each segment with a list of duties its members were supposed to do. This prevented clash and duplicity of work, as each of the four classes knew what it is supposed to do. This in effect created a hierarchy in the society, with the learned ones who were known as the 'Brahmins' occupying the upper rung just like a patriarch of a large extended family who oversees the working and welfare of the entire family. A patriarch is an old man, and has the backing of years of experience behind him. Obviously he is the most competent man to give sane and rationale advice to the younger generation. This exactly was the role of the Brahmin.

Even in the modern world, a child is taught to give respect to his elders; its part of his moral education. Hence, 'paying respects to Brahmins' should be understood in the correct perspective.

The salient features of Brahmins are the following—they should possess these noble qualities—(1) 'Riju'-be expert in the Rig and the Yajur Vedas, (2) 'Tapa'-should be involved in doing penances, observing austerities and enduring sufferings for the welfare of the soul and the society, (3) 'Santosh'-be contented and satisfied, (4) 'Kshamaa'-to be forgiving and tolerant, (5) 'Sheel'-to have such virtues as good character, dignity, decorum and virtuousness, (6) 'Jitendriya'-to have self control over the sense organs, (7) 'Data'-to be a giver, one who sacrifices his own interests for the benefit of others, (8) 'Gyani'-one who is well learned, wise, enlightened and erudite, (9) 'Dayaalu'-to be merciful and compassionate. [Shatpath Brahman.]

An entire Upanishad called Vajra-shuchiko-panishad, belonging to the Sam Veda tradition is devoted to the subject. The eclectic virtues of Brahmins have been expounded in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahman 5 as well as in Canto 3, Brahman 8, verse no. 10.

The Param Hans Parivrajak Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, paragraph no. 7 describes in a holistic way the virtues of a true Brahm as the one who is highly wise, self-realised, erudite and enlightened about the Atma and the principles governing the true meaning of Brahm and such religious signs as doing fire sacrifices, wearing the sacred thread and the tuft of hair on the head, observing sacraments etc.

To quote this Upanishad—'A true Brahmin is a wise and enlightened person who treats the Atma, the pure consciousness, as the non-dual Principal of creation (i.e. who regards the Atma as a personification of the supreme Brahm that is non-dual or Advaita and the only supreme Authority of creation), and for whom being steady in his meditation and contemplation as well as spiritual pursuit is the symbolic tuft of hair—such a person is deemed to be cleansed and made holy by whatever he does. This is because all his deeds are deemed to be auspicious and holy. [That is, he need not do special deeds such as fire

sacrifices or observing of sacraments in order to wash off his sins or any kind of spiritual taints that might be adhering to him.]

He is deemed to have completed doing all religious and auspicious deeds required to be done by a man.

It must be understood that such an enlightened man is indeed a Brahmin for he is dedicated and devoted to Brahm (the Supreme Being), he is no less than a God, he is indeed a 'Rishi' (or a great sage), he is a 'Tapasvi' (or someone who is well endowed with the glorious virtues of Tapa, i.e. austerity and penance, and is steadfast in observing its tenets), he is the best follower of the tenets of the scriptures and an excellent spiritual aspirant, he is therefore the Guru (guide, teacher and preceptor) for the whole world.

A truly wise, enlightened and self-realised aspirant who understands the implications and import of what has been said above realises the truth of the statement that the pure conscious Atma standing for Brahm is the true identity of his. And therefore such an enlightened man declares 'It (Brahm; Atma; Truth; Consciousness) is me'.

The Pashupat Brahm Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 19 describes who a true Brahmin is as follows—"A true Brahmin is one who wears the Yagya Sutra (the sacred thread worn during the performance of fire sacrifices, especially the symbolic one as narrated in verse no. 16), who employs the Pranav Mantra (i.e. the OM Mantra) for his religious needs (such as when doing Japa or repetition, Yoga or meditation, Dhyana or contemplation, etc.), and who is well-versed in the principles of Brahm Yagya (spiritual practices which are equivalent to a formal fire sacrifice but done in a subtle and symbolic manner which lead directly to the realisation of the supreme cosmic Consciousness and the absolute Truth known as Brahm).

The Gods (the term is a metaphor for the virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, holiness, divinity, nobility etc.) are to be found in the diligent observance of the principles that define a man as a Brahmin. [That is, if a man is a true Brahmin as outlined above, he is deemed to be living God in the sense that he would possess all the eclectic virtues that collectively defined as being 'godly'.]

The Hans (the enlightened Atma, the self-realised and Brahm-realised person) who adheres to the principles of Sutra (i.e. who follows the tenets that lead to Brahm-realisation, who offers his obeisance to the Supreme Being in the manner outlined in this Upanishad, who leads a life like a true Brahmin as described above) is deemed to be doing the Yagya (the fire sacrifice).

There is no difference between the Hans and Pranav. That is, there is no difference between the immaculate Atma, the pure conscious 'self' known as the Hans, and the supreme transcendental Brahm known as Pranav. [Brahm is the cosmic Consciousness that produces vibrations of life in the ether that are heard in the form of Naad. These dynamic vibrations in the cosmic ether produce sound that is encapsulated in the monosyllabic word OM. Hence, the OM is a sound form or the cosmic Naad known as Pranav which stands for Brahm because it is the latter which has generated this sound. If the Atma is personified as a divine Swan known as Hans, the supreme cosmic Atma known as Brahm is personified in the form of Pranav which is a cosmic sound called Pranav, and which is represented by the word OM. Refer verse no. 17 and 20 of this Canto 1 of the Pashupat Brahm Upanishad in this context.] (19)."

The Par Brahm Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse nos. 8-13 describe who *is* a true Brahmin, and verse no. 14 describes who *is not*. Now, let us examine what these verses say.

First let us see *who is not a true Brahmin*:—"Verse no. 14 = Those Brahmins who are engrossed merely in performing rituals and observing sacraments, or who are engaged in the mundane affairs of the world are Brahmins only for name's sake (and not true Brahmins), because they live only to fill their stomachs and enjoy the fame, comforts and pleasures that come with worldly respect. Such people go to hell at the end of their lives.

[That is, they continue to take birth and die again, and during each life they undergo sufferings and miseries that are part and parcel of gross mundane existence. They do not find Mukti or spiritual liberation and deliverance, nor do they find peace and bliss that comes with

self and Brahm realisation. They do not have true Gyan, and are only pretending to have it to fulfill their worldly desires. In short, they are not true Brahmins, they are imposters, and they do not do justice to the institution of Brahm-hood. They give the holy stature of being a Brahmin a bad name.

The question arises, who then is a true Brahmin? The answer is self-evident in the foregoing as well as the following verses. That is, only those who have true knowledge of Brahm, and the depth of wisdom and enlightenment to understand what the term 'Brahm' is all about, who do not hanker after external purity and formalities but lay stress on inner cleansing and sincerity of purpose are true Brahmins. Such people would not be much bothered about sporting a tuft on the head or wearing the sacred thread to prove that they are Brahmins, but would instead strive to inculcate the glorious virtues that are so typical of those who have become self and Brahm realised, who have really understood the truth and reality of things.] (14).”]

ए सब लच्छन बसहिं जासु उर । जानेहु तात संत संतत फुर ॥ ७ ॥

ē saba lacchana basahim jāsu ura. jānēhu tāta santa santata phura. 7.

All people who have these positive virtues firmly established in their hearts must surely be regarded as saints. (7)

सम दम नियम नीति नहिं डोलहिं । परुष बचन कबहूँ नहिं बोलहिं ॥ ८ ॥

sama dama niyama nīti nahim ḍōlahim. paruṣa bacana kabahūṁ nahim bōlahim. 8.

They have, and practice, the auspicious virtues of Sham and Dam¹ (self control of the senses, and suppression of desires for self gratification as well as for the material world with its temptations, comforts and pleasures).

They never violate the laws of Dharma (probity, propriety, righteousness, ethics, morality, nobility and auspiciousness), and diligently follow them. They never say an angry word to others indicating haughtiness and insult. (8)

[Note—¹*Sham* is control of the Mana (the wayward mind and the heart), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (sub-conscious mind and the subtler aspects of the mind and intellect), and Ahankar (sense of pride in the subtle as well as the grosser aspect of the body of the creature), and concentrating their efforts towards the Lord God represented by the Supreme Consciousness and the Absolute Truth of creation at the macro level of creation, and the Atma or the soul of the individual at the micro level.

Dam is its associated control of the various sense organs of the body—viz. the five organs of perception (eyes, ears, tongue, nose and skin) and the five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genitals).

It is therefore obvious that ‘Dam’ is control of the grosser aspects of the body of the creature, while ‘Sham’ is the control of his subtle body.

The *Niyam* means regularity and diligence in observance of certain laws and rules that help the spiritual aspirant reach his goal. There are said to be ten Niyams. They have been already explained in this book in a note appended to the Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 80 appearing in Section 1, sub-section no. (8) above that describes the Chariot of God/Dharma Rath as it was narrated by Lord Ram for the benefit of Vibhishan.]

दो०. निंदा अस्तुति उभय सम ममता मम पद कंज ।
ते सज्जन मम प्रानप्रिय गुन मंदिर सुख पुंज ॥ ३८ ॥

dōhā.

nindā astuti ubhaya sama mamatā mama pada kaṇja.
tē sajjana mama prānapriya guna mandira sukha puṇja. 38.

They remain unruffled and calm even under the greatest of provocations; they treat praises and insults equally with stoic indifference. They have no attachment and affection for anything or anyone in this world, but for my holy feet. Verily I say that such pious gentlemen are very dear to me (Lord Ram) like one loves one's own self, and are deemed to be a temple of all that is good, virtuous and holy; they become a treasury of peace, happiness and bliss.' (Doha no. 38)

[Note—A true saint is one who treats all alike, and is completely detached from the world; he remains eternally calm and poised; he has no trace of ego and pride in him. He is humility and piety personified. Naturally therefore, he is neither offended when anyone speaks ill of him, nor elated at praises.

His only interest is the Lord; he has only one sort of affection—and that is in the holy feet of the Lord God, who in this case is Lord Ram, a personified form of the Supreme Being. The Lord says that such persons are extremely close and dear to him, and therefore they become a virtual temple of auspicious virtues and a fountainhead of happiness and bliss.]

(6.3) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 46:

Once, Lord Ram called a congregation of all the citizens of Ayodhya and preached them about the spiritual importance and significance of Bhakti in the following words:

चौ०. जौं परलोक इहाँ सुख चहहू । सुनि मम बचन हृदयँ दृढ़ गहहू ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

jaum paralōka ihām̐ sukha cahahū. suni mama bacana hṛdayam̐ dṛṛha gahahū. 1.

If you want happiness and peace that is available in the heaven (obtained upon death) in this world itself where you presently live, then you must listen to me attentively and make a firm resolve in your heart to obey what I say. (1)

[Note—This line can be interpreted as follows as well—“If you want happiness and peace in your present life as well as in the afterlife (i.e. if you plan to go to heaven after death; if you wish to ensure a secure destiny for yourself), then you must listen to me attentively and make a firm resolve in your heart to obey what I say.”]

सुलभ सुखद मारग यह भाई । भगति मोरि पुरान श्रुति गाई ॥ २ ॥

sulabha sukhada mārāga yaha bhā'ī. bhagati mōri purāna śruti gā'ī. 2.

Having my 'Bhakti', i.e. having devotion, dedication, submission and affection for me, is an easy and readily available path for your spiritual welfare and good. This is endorsed and reiterated by the ancient scriptures also, such as the Purans and the Srutis (Vedas). (2)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 16, Lord Ram tells Laxman that "I am very easily pleased by a person who offers Bhakti to me". Or "The only thing that makes me easily pleased is Bhakti".]

ग्यान अगम प्रत्यूह अनेका । साधन कठिन न मन कहूँ टेका ॥ ३ ॥

gyāna agama pratyūha anēkā. sādhana kaṭhina na mana kahum̐ ṭēkā. 3.

The path of Gyan (knowledge) is difficult and riddled with obstacles. It is difficult to tread upon it, difficult to be successful in it, and difficult for the mind and heart to maintain their momentum on this path. (3)

करत कष्ट बहु पावइ कोऊ । भक्ति हीन मोहि प्रिय नहिं सोऊ ॥ ४ ॥

karata kaṣṭa bahu pāva'i kō'ū. bhakti hīna mōhi priya nahim̐ sō'ū. 4.

Even if someone attains success by following the path of Gyan, I do not favour him because Bhakti is very dear to me. (4)

[Note—Two paths have been outlined by Lord Ram here for the all-round spiritual welfare of the creature. One is the path of Bhakti, and the other is the path of Gyan. The path of Bhakti is extremely easy as compared to the path of Gyan.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttara Kand, Chaupai 11-16 and stanza 'ka' of Doha 115, and Chaupai 1-8 and stanza 'ka' of Doha 116, to Doha 120, the crow saint Kabhusund preaches Garud, the legendary eagle, the mount of Lord Vishnu, the difference between Gyan and Bhakti. In the course of the discourse it is made clear why the path of Bhakti is superior to and better than the path of Gyan in order to attain one's spiritual goal of attaining Mukti or Moksha (liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation for the soul). Let us briefly see what this learned sage has to say—

"Garud asked sage Kabhusund—'Please tell me oh Lord all the differences between Gyan and Bhakti'. Kabhusund replied—'There is no difference between them, both of them are equally potent and efficacious in eliminating the horrors and torments of birth and death. Those who are exalted in knowledge however point out some differences between them. I'll tell these to you, listen carefully.

Gyan (wisdom, knowledge of truth and reality, erudition and sagacity, spiritual expertise and enlightenment), Vairagya (renunciation and dispassion), Yoga (meditation leading to a union with the Supreme Being), and Vigyan (true Realisation leading to

unequivocal conviction and faith on the supreme and transcendental Reality and Truth)—these are all masculine in nature and regarded as the muscular male who has strength and powers but can be easily corrupted. A man is physically stronger and more powerful as compared to his female counterpart, and this is right from their birth as a natural phenomenon. Only a man who is resolute and firm in his mind can remain unattached and forsake being lured by the deluding and entrapping charms of a woman, and not the one who is lascivious and passionate and has turned away from the holy feet of Sri Ram”. {Uttar Kand, Chaupai 11-16, and stanza ‘ka’ of Doha 115.}}

The path of Gyan is like a double-edged sword. Oh king of birds, it does not take long to fall (slip, commit errors) and get injured (harmed) in this difficult path. Only those who can successfully tread across it become eligible to attain the spiritually exalted stature of ‘Kaivalya’, the spiritual state of existence that is one of its only kind, is the most exalted and the best. [It is known as ‘Moksha’—final emancipation and salvation of the soul.] (Chaupai line nos. 1-2).

The great saints and sages (those who are wise and experienced in this matter), the Purans and the Vedas (the primary scriptures), as well as the rest of the scriptures (the secondary scriptures) affirm unanimously that the attainment of the exalted spiritual stature of ‘Kaivalya’ is extremely difficult and riddled with difficulties. But oh the wise one (Garud), the same ‘Mukti’ (beatitude, the final emancipation and salvation of the soul that is known as Kaivalya) is attainable automatically, without facing any difficulties or making any special efforts to acquire it due to the grace of Lord Ram which comes when one sincerely worships the Lord and has developed profound devotion and deep affection for him. [Put simply it means that the best kind of spiritual state of existence marked by the highest form of beatitude and bliss, and the best spiritual goal of the soul to obtain its emancipation and salvation are obtained when one adopts the path of ‘Bhakti’ instead of pursuing the path of ‘Gyan’. It is true that Gyan is very powerful and potent, but it is like a male who can be seduced by a cunning woman. On the contrary, Bhakti is like a soft-hearted and kind woman who cannot be seduced by another woman no matter how cunning she might be!] (Chaupai line nos. 3-4).

Listen, the king of birds (Garud). Just as it is impossible that water can stay anywhere if there is no solid ground to support it no matter how hard a person tries to do so (for liquid water needs a hard surface for support), the beatitude and bliss of Mukti is not sustainable with the ground (support) of Bhakti. (Chaupai line nos. 5-6).

Therefore, those who are wise and intelligent prefer to have Bhakti instead of Mukti. [This is because if one has Bhakti, the best form of Mukti that is known as ‘Kaivalya’ would be easily available. It must be noted that the term ‘Mukti’ does not necessarily mean Kaivalya, as there are many kinds of Muktis, which broadly mean freedom—such as Jivan Mukti, Videha Mukti, Mukti from worldly problems, Mukti from bodily sufferings, Mukti from bondages etc. But these do not necessarily mean spiritual Mukti of the highest kind—it is called the Kaivalya Mukti. This sort of Mukti is attained by two paths—one is the path of Gyan, and the other is the path of Bhakti. As outlined above, the wise ones choose the latter over the former—i.e. they prefer Bhakti over Gyan. Once Bhakti comes, Kaivalya Mukti is on its way automatically.]

The benefit of following the path of Bhakti is that the basis of all spiritual ailments, such as remaining trapped in the endless cycle of birth and death in this mortal world, which is ‘Avidya’ (lack of correct spiritual knowledge), gets automatically eliminated, without making any special effort for getting rid of it, just like the case of one eating some delicious food to quench his hunger or for taste but as soon as the food enters the body it begins to get digested because the digestive fire burning inside the body is triggered automatically on its own, and digests the food silently without making it known to the eater. Say, is a man not a dumb fool if this miraculous Bhakti does not find favour with him? (Chaupai line nos. 7-10).

Oh the enemy of serpents (i.e. Garud, who is an Eagle and is regarded an enemy of serpents as it immediately snaps them up if he happens to see them anywhere)! It is just not possible to get across this vast ocean represented by the world of transmigration if one does not become firmly convinced of the eclectic view ‘I am a humble servant, and the Lord God is the one whom I serve’. Be firmly established in this view-point, and have steady and robust

devotion and affection in the holy feet of Lord Ram. Those Jivas (living beings) who worship and have devotion for Lord Ram—the almighty Lord of creation who can turn the inanimate entities into animate entities, and vice versa—are indeed most fortunate and blessed. (Doha no. 119).

Oh Garud! Herein above I had elucidated the principles governing Gyan. Now listen carefully about Bhakti which is like a priceless Gem.

Lord Ram's Bhakti (having devotion, affection, love, faith, belief in the Lord; submission and surrender before him; serving him selflessly) is like a Gem known as 'Chintaamani'—one that removes all worries. In whichever heart it lives, there is illumination in it, day and night. [That is, any person who has given Bhakti a chance to live in his heart does not have to worry about his well-being any longer, as this now becomes the responsibility of Lord Ram to whom Bhakti is dedicated.]

Unlike the illumination (of spiritual wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation) that Gyan produces, for which butter, lamp and wick are needed (i.e. for which many virtues/qualities need to be fostered and carefully nurtured as outlined in the verses quoted above), the illumination produced by Bhakti is self-created; it is an incandescent light that does not need any external aid to illuminate the inner-self of the Jiva.

Besides the illumination created by this Gem, the second natural benefit is that poverty (represented by the need to seek happiness and bliss in the outside world of material sense objects) never troubles the bearer of this Gem (because the presence of a 'Gem' in the heart itself means that the inner treasury is full of riches, the 'spiritual riches' in the form of beatitude, tranquility and contentedness that lead to bliss and happiness).

The third benefit is that the gust of wind represented by temptations of the material objects of the world and the desire of the sense organs for gratification cannot blow out the light of this Gem (because the light emanating from this Gem is self-generated, unlike the case of the light emanating from the lamp representing Gyan which depends upon external efforts as detailed earlier). (Chaupai line nos. 1-4).

The self-effusing light from this Gem helps to eliminate the darkness created by Avidya (lack of Vidya; lack of true and correct spiritual knowledge). The irritating group of insects represented by such negativities as Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, ego, pride and vanity) etc. fail to disturb the Jiva and dirty the environs of the Gem. [In the case of an oil lamp, the insects are attracted to its light in their hordes, dance around its flame, get burnt, and die, littering the area around the flame and the lamp. Sometimes it often also happens that they die and fall in the oil and cover its surface with their carcasses, thereby suffocating the wick of its space and the flame of its air, and this results in the flame gradually dying away. In the case of the Gem no such thing can happen because there is no physical flame to attract the insects.]

The net effect is that the person in whose heart Bhakti resides, the evil-mongering wicked fellows such as Kaam (worldly passions), Krodha (anger), Lobha (greed) and their like, do not dare to come near him. (Chaupai line nos. 5-6).

For such a man, poison becomes nectar, and enemy becomes a friend. No one can expect to have peace, happiness and comfort without this miraculous Gem. Such a person who possesses this Gem does not have to suffer from any of the grievous mental diseases which torment all the rest of the creatures. (Chaupai line nos. 7-8).

In whose heart resides the Gem representing Bhakti for Lord Ram, verily such a person never has to suffer even a trace of misery and grief even in his dream. Therefore, a person who makes diligent effort to acquire this Gem of Bhakti is deemed to be the most wise, clever, intelligent and fortunate amongst all men. (Chaupai line nos. 9-10).

All said and done, this Gem is accessible only when Lord Ram becomes graceful and favourable upon the devotee. This too is very easy (because the Lord is gracious and merciful and obliging by nature, and a simple request or prayer is sufficient to make the Lord grant this Gem to the devotee), but the irony is that still the unfortunate man rejects it. [In the absence of true knowledge and awareness of who Lord Ram is, the ignorant man thinks that he is submitting himself to heresy, and prefers to follow the troublesome and arduous path of Gyan in his endeavour to seek Mukti for himself.] (Chaupai line nos. 11-12).

The scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans are like the holy Mountains; the divine story of Lord Ram, with its numerous versions and interpretations, are like the numerous mines (caves) in them (where spiritual secrets lie hidden and buried); the many sages and saints are the wise ones who know about them and their sacred location (i.e. they can unravel the mysteries of the story and explain them to the eager hearer); and the wise intellect and mind are like the spade, the shovel and the pick-axe which are to be used to unearth the gems hidden in them (i.e. to unravel the holiness, the divinity and spiritual message contained in the story of Lord Ram). Oh Garud, the two eyes needed to see this treasure are represented by the twin virtues of Gyan and Vairagya (i.e. one must have a deep and penetrating intellect to understand the import of the message contained in the divine story, and he must have the virtue of renunciation and detachment from this world so that he can concentrate upon benefiting from this knowledge without getting constantly distracted and disturbed by the tug and pull of the mundane world). (Chaupai line nos. 13-14).

A man who searches for this Gem of Bhakti with due sincerity and devotion (commitment and diligence) is sure to find it. This Gem is a treasury full of all happiness and joy for him; it is a giver of all happiness and joy to him. In my (Kaagbhusund's) view, the devotee of Lord Ram is superior to the Lord himself. (Chaupai line nos. 15-16).

If Lord Ram is the ocean, then the wise men (who are devoted to him and possess the Gem of Bhakti) are like the rain-bearing clouds. [The ocean is full of water, but it is of no use to the world because its water cannot irrigate fields and produce crop. The salty and dirty water of the ocean evaporates to form clouds. The water molecules in the cloud are free from their salty origin; they are clean and sweet. When this water, which has its origin in the ocean, begins to shower down upon the earth as rain, it fosters life and greenery everywhere. Harvest and life directly depend upon rain-water, and not at all upon the ocean, though the origin of the rain is in the ocean which is a vast reservoir of water, but the rain benefits the population more directly. This is exactly what is meant here. Though the divine story of Lord Ram is a vast reservoir of spirituality and bliss, its benefit can be enjoyed only when it is explained by wise men, and when the seeker accesses the key to his happiness and bliss, which is Bhakti.]

In the same way, if Lord Hari is like the tree of sandalwood, the saints and sages are like the gust of soft wind (that takes the sweet fragrance of the sandalwood and helps to spread it far and wide). [The saints and sages help to propagate the virtue of Bhakti and other spiritual fruits contained in the divine story of Lord Ram, and make them easily available to this world, in its farthest corner, just like the wind carries the fragrance of the sandalwood to distant places, far away from the physical location of the actual tree.]

Bhakti is the best fruit of all spiritual endeavours, and no one can get it (recognize this fruit amongst the cluster of so many assorted fruits) without the help of saints and sages. (Chaupai line nos. 17-18).

Realizing the importance of saints and other wise ones in the effort to attain the Gem of Bhakti, anyone who seeks them and establishes communion with them is easily able to acquire the Gem of Bhakti of Lord Ram (Chaupai line no. 19).

Brahm whose knowledge is contained in the Vedas is like a vast and fathomless ocean; the virtue of Gyan is like the Mandraachal Mountain; and the saints and wise ones are like the Gods. [This alludes to the legendary churning of the ocean by the Gods in search of Amrit, the nectar of eternity and bliss. At that time, they had used this mountain as the churning rod.] Anyone who churns this ocean and extracts the Amrit represented by Bhakti is able to partake it (just like the case of the Gods who drank the Amrit and became eternal and blissful). (Doha no. 120 Ka).

It is the Bhakti for Lord Hari (Vishnu) that protects the devotee with the help of the shield symbolized by the virtue of Vairagya, and kills his enemies represented by Mada, Lobha and Moha by using the sword of Gyan, to make him fearless. Oh Garud, think and ponder over this carefully." (Doha no. 120 Kha).]

भक्ति सुत्रं सकल सुख खानी । बिनु सतसंग न पावहिं प्रानी ॥ ५ ॥

bhakti sutantra sakala sukha khānī. binu satasaṅga na pāvahiṁ prānī. 5.

Bhakti is independent from all fetters; it does not depend upon any other factor to help the person who practices it to attain liberation and deliverance. In fact, Bhakti is a treasure-trove of all goodness and spiritual blessedness that gives the creature the best form of happiness and bliss.

But ‘Satsang’ (having communion with pious and holy people who have Bhakti in their hearts, who love the Lord God and find pleasure in serving the Lord and following a pious way of life) is essential to obtain Bhakti, and it is not possible otherwise. (5)

[Note—This is in consonance with the time tested adage that ‘one becomes like the company one keeps’. If a person is in constant contact with good, pious and holy people, it is natural that he would be influenced, even without any conscious effort on his part, by the lifestyle and thoughts of the latter. In due course of time, ‘Bhakti’ would come to that person naturally and on its own. He will see the positive effects of Bhakti on the person who practices it in life, and this would convince him better of its immense benefits which mere theoretical knowledge won’t do.

It is also like the case of a student learning a subject more thoroughly if he takes practical lessons under an expert teacher; mere books won’t help him.]

पुन्य पुंज बिनु मिलहिं न संता । सतसंगति संसृति कर अंता ॥ ६ ॥

pun'ya punja binu milahiṁ na santā. satasaṅgati sansṛti kara antā. 6.

Saints are not accessible without the good affects arising out of leading an auspicious and righteous way of life. [If a man persistently indulges in evil thoughts and leading a corrupt way of life, his sub-conscious becomes accustomed to this vile environment. Just as a man used to eating spicy and fried food will have no taste for boiled rice or plain vegetables, a sinful man has no inclination to seek the company of saints and holy people. They will talk about a way of life that will not suit him.]

Company of saints and pious people, and establishing a communion with them, brings to an end all the spiritual miseries and torments from which the Jiva suffers. This company and communion eliminates the delusions pertaining to this world and helps the Jiva to break free from the endless cycle of birth and death in this mundane and mortal world. (6)

[Note—The glory of saints and the good affects of their company have been lauded and immensely extolled in Ram Charit Manas at a number of places as follows—(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 2; (ii) Baal Kand, Doha no. 3 and Chaupai line nos. 5-12 that precede it; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7; (iv) Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 13-16 that precedes Doha no. 14; (v) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 37, to Doha no. 38; (vi) Doha no. 46 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precedes Doha no. 46.

In Ram Charit Manas, 7/121/13, the crow sage Kaagbhusund tells Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu) that “there is no bigger or better source of happiness and joy than having company of saints and pious people”.

In Ram Charit Manas, 3/16/4, Lord Ram expressly tells Laxman that—“Bhakti is an entity that is most beautiful and magnificent; it is the root of all happiness and pleasures. It is obtained when saints are kind upon a person.”

In Ram Charit Manas, 3/35/8, Lord Ram stresses the importance of saints and their relationship with Bhakti when advises Sabari, while enumerating the nine forms of Bhakti to her, that—“Communion with saints and other pious people is the first form of Bhakti”.

In another of Tulsidas’ great spiritual books, known by the name of ‘Vairagya Sandipani’, the glories of saints have been expounded in verse nos. 8-33.]

पुन्य एक जग महँ नहिँ दूजा । मन क्रम बचन बिप्र पद पूजा ॥ ७ ॥

pun'ya ēka jaga mahum' nahim dūjā. mana krama bacana bipra pada pūjā. 7.

There is no other auspicious deed that is greater than worshipping the holy feet of Dwij (Brahmins) with one's mind, actions and words. (7)

[Note—As has been explained elsewhere, respect for a Brahmin is due to the fact that he is a learned man, well versed in the scriptures and wise enough to understand their teachings in the correct perspective. He is able implement these teachings in his own life, and therefore is the most competent Guru for the rest of the society. Of course, if a Brahmin does not live up to his expectations and cannot hold high the torch of Dharma, he is not worthy of any respect whatever. Lord Ram's words must be interpreted in the correct context.

In Ram Charit Manas, 3/46/3, Lord Ram tells sage Narad that “Bhakti includes having affection for and showing respect to the holy feet of one's Guru, the Lord God, and Vipra (Brahmins)”.

In Ram Charit Manas, 7/46/3, Lord Ram tells sage Narad that “Bhakti includes having affection for and showing respect to the holy feet of one's Guru, the Lord God, and Vipra (Brahmins)”.

In Ram Charit Manas, 7/109/11-14, Lord Shiva declares—“Service to Brahmins is the way to please the Lord God. Always treat ‘Sants’ (meaning literally ‘saints’, but here implying ‘saintly, holy and pious Brahmins’) as being equivalent to ‘Anant’ (the infinite and eternal Lord God; the Supreme Being; Lord Vishnu; the Viraat Purush). Even if a person escapes the wrath of Indra's fierce weapon known as Vajra, of my (Shiva's) trident, of the baton of Kaal (the God of death) and Lord Vishnu's invincible Chakra (serrated discus)—verily I say that such a person cannot escape being burnt to ashes by the fierce wrath (curse) of Brahmins.”

In Ram Charit Manas, 7/105/5, sage Kaagbhusund tells Garud that the Dwij “was merciful, had a good nature, and was a virtual treasury of righteous principles”.]

सानुकूल तेहि पर मुनि देवा । जो तजि कपटु करइ द्विज सेवा ॥ ८ ॥

sānukūla tēhi para muni dēvā. jō taji kapaṭu kara'i dvija sēvā. 8.

Sages and Gods are pleased with those who serve Dwij (Brahmins) sincerely, without any wickedness, deceit and pretensions. (8)

दो0. औरउ एक गुपुत मत सबहि कहउँ कर जोरि ।

संकर भजन बिना नर भगति न पावइ मोरि ॥ ४५ ॥

dōhā.

aura'u ēka guputa mata sabahi kaha'um̐ kara jōri.
saṅkara bhajana binā nara bhagati na pāva'i mōri. 45.

There is one more secret I must tell you all with all the humility I can gather. Without adoring Lord Shiva, invoking his holy name and worshipping him earnestly, one cannot have (or expect success in having) devotion for me. (Doha no. 45)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, there are specific verses that reiterate this declaration of Lord Ram—(i) Doha no. 2; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede this Doha no. 2

This is an important caveat included by the Lord. Earlier also, in Ram Charit Manas, 6/2/3—6/3/4, Lord Ram has asserted that he himself has the greatest respect for Lord Shiva, that if a man hopes to have devotion for the Lord (Ram) without worshipping Lord Shiva first then he goes to hell and is a complete dud, and that anyone who says that he is dear to Lord Shiva and inimical to me (Lord Ram) and vice versa then such a person goes to fall in a fierce heaven to suffer for one Kalpa (a very long period of time, equivalent to 1 day of Brahma the creator, which are equal to 432×10^7 earthly years approximately).

The context of this assertion was Lord Ram's consecration of Lord Shiva's Lingam (symbolic idol) on the shores of the ocean and worshipping Shiva before Lord Ram embarked on his mission to defeat and eliminate the cruel demons from Lanka. He decided to invoke Lord Shiva's blessings for this great enterprise.

Lord Shiva is no ordinary God; he is known as 'Mahadeva'—the great Lord God. He is also known as 'Ishan' or the symbol of Isha, the Supreme Being. He is a personified form of bliss and renunciation that comes with self-realisation, enlightenment and a constant state of Samadhi (a trance-like of transcendental existence) attained in higher reaches of meditation and contemplation. He is an embodiment of Truth and its beauty.

This exceptional adoration for Lord Shiva in the heart of Lord Ram is not unilateral, for Shiva also enshrines Lord Ram in his heart, and constantly repeats Lord Ram's holy Name, known as the 'Tarka Mantra', a spiritual formula that provides deliverance to the creature's soul from the cycle of transmigration.

These facts have been expressly and clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas at the following places in Baal Kand—

(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 52 where Lord Shiva tells his divine consort Parvati or Uma that "Raghubir (Lord Ram) is my sole revered deity; I adore him as my Lord God; Lord Ram is the one who is constantly served by wise and enlightened sages and seers".

(ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19 where it is asserted that "Lord Shiva constantly repeats (does Japa) the great Mantra of Lord Ram, and uses this mystically empowered divine formula to provide Mukti (liberation and deliverance) to the dying creature at Kasi (the pilgrim city of Varanasi, which is famous as the site for cremation of the dead so that their souls find liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death".

(iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 19 where it is asserted that "Lord Shiva knows the immense importance of Lord Ram's holy name because it is on the strength of its life-giving and life-sustaining powers, and its ability to neutralize all the evil affects of poisons, both physical as well as symbolic, that he managed to gulp the horrible poison, known as the 'Kaal Kut', that emerged from the celestial ocean at the time of its churning in search of Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity, by the gods and the demons in some ancient time".

(iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 26 where it is declared that "It is as a divine blessing of Lord Ram's holy name that Lord Shiva is regarded as a fount and treasury of

all auspiciousness and holiness inspite of his body being adorned and surrounded by unholy things (such as being covered by ash, being wrapped by coiled serpents, remaining almost naked like an ascetic, and living in the cremation ground to do meditation and provide Mukti to dying creatures).

(v) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35 where it is said that “the divine story of Lord Ram, known as the ‘Ram Charit Manas’, was first revealed in the heart of Lord Shiva”.

(vi) Chaupai line no. 36 that precedes Doha no. 1 where Tulsidas assert that “the Ram Charit Manas emerged in his own heart as a blessing of Lord Shiva”.

(vii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 50 where it is narrated how Uma, the divine consort of Shiva, was extremely perplexed when she saw that Lord Shiva had reverentially bowed his head before Lord Ram though Shiva himself is so exalted and a senior God in creation that the entire world bows its head before him.

In another great legendary narration of Lord Ram’s divine story, the famous ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’ by sage Veda Vyas, the legendary classifier of the Vedas and the author of the Purans, it it stated that after being crowned as the king of Ayodhya, Lord Ram had established countless numbers of Shiva Lingams in his kingdom—refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 27.]

चौ०. कहहु भगति पथ कवन प्रयासा । जोग न मख जप तप उपवासा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

kahahu bhagati patha kavana prayāsā. jōga na makha japa tapa upavāsā. 1.

Say, what effort is needed to walk on the path of Bhakti, as one need not do Yoga (meditation), Makha (or fire sacrifices; other religious duties and observances), Japa (constant repetition of any holy Mantra or spiritual formula), Tapa (austerity, penance and enduring hardships) or Upavaas (abstinence from food and drink; fasting).

[In other words, the path of Bhakti is extremely easy and simple. It does not require any special effort or incur any encumbrances on the way. It simply needs love, dedication, faith, submission, commitment and devotion for the Lord God. It is as easy as a child loving its mother. No formalities and decorum are needed.] (1)

सरल सुभाव न मन कुटिलाई । जथा लाभ संतोष सदाई ॥ २ ॥

sarala subhāva na mana kuṭilāī. jathā lābha santōṣa sadāī. 2.

[Now, Lord Ram outlines the basic qualities that one must have to develop Bhakti in his heart, and be successful in its implementation. These are general good qualities a person must have in his life, whether he wishes to have Bhakti or not, as even a cursory reading of these virtues would show that they help the person become a good human being instead of some pervert and evil creature who is no better than an animal.]

Such persons who have Bhakti must have a simple and unpretentious nature which is free from cunning, wickedness, perversions, falsehood, deceit and conceit. They are

always contented with whatever they have, not greediness or yearning for more. Hence, they are always satisfied and happy. (2)

मोर दास कहाइ नर आसा । करइ तौ कहहु कहा बिस्वासा ॥ ३ ॥

mōra dāsa kahā'i nara āsā. kara'i tau kahahu kahā bisvāsā. 3.

Say, if one claims to be, on the one hand, my (Lord Ram's) devotee and says that he is dedicated to me, depends upon me, and has no one else as his Lord, but on the other hand expects something from others, or depends upon others—then how can he so claim that he is my true follower, is truly dedicated to me, has true devotion and faith in me and has submitted himself to me in the true sense?

[In other words, a true devotee of the Lord is one who does speak lie, and is completely trustworthy in all actions and words. He must be fully dedicated to the Supreme Lord, and depend upon the Lord as his sole protector and benefactor.] (3)

बहुत कहउँ का कथा बढ़ाई । एहि आचरन बस्य मैं भाई ॥ ४ ॥

bahuta kaha'um' kā kathā barhā'ī. ēhi ācarana basya mair̥ bhā'ī. 4.

What more can I (Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being) say; I am committed to love and protect those who have the grand eclectic virtues enumerated above. (4)

बैर न बिग्रह आस न त्रासा । सुखमय ताहि सदा सब आसा ॥ ५ ॥

baira na bigraha āsa na trāsā. sukhamaya tāhi sadā saba āsā. 5.

Such a person must not be inimical to anyone or harbour ill-will and malice towards any person in this world. He should not fight or quarrel with anyone, nor create animosity and hatred. He should not expect anything from anyone, nor should he fear them.

[Since he expects nothing from anyone, hates no one, and has no enemy in this world, it is obvious that he has nothing to fear from anybody. Since he wants nothing, there is no sense of frustration at not having been able to acquire anything, or that someone is preventing him from acquiring it, a situation that leads to jealousy and ill-will.]

For such a dispassionate, detached, enlightened and wise saint, all the directions (i.e. all the corners of the world) are equal and comfortable; they all provide him happiness and joy as he has neither any fear from any quarter nor is he jealous of the prosperity and wealth of others that may cause some degree of inferiority complex or a sense of dearth and want in him. (5)

अनारंभ अनिकेत अमानी । अनघ अरोष दच्छ बिग्यानी ॥ ६ ॥

anārambha anikēta amānī. anagha arōṣa daccha bigyānī. 6.

He does not start doing any deed with an expectation of a reward or favourable result, and hence does it with total detachment with the idea that it is his destiny that has presented itself before him in the form of the situation requiring him to do what he is doing. [And wise and enlightened as he is, he submits all the consequences of his deeds, good or bad, to the Lord God, becoming free from any mental involvement and attendant worries.]

He has no home of his own.

[Here, the reference is to the gross body which all living beings regard as their own truthful self, as well as the gross world which all living beings regard as their habitat. The sacred idea is that a true saint and holy person is he who has become enlightened of the great spiritual fact that the true 'self' is the Atma, the pure cosmic Consciousness that is an ethereal, subtle and sublime entity which has no fixed abode because it is all-pervading and omnipresent in this world as the Holy Spirit. This Atma or Soul is distinct from the gross body, and since the Atma is the person's 'truthful self', he does not regard the body as his identity. Again, such a self-realised person understands that the outside world is transient and delusory, it is a creation of the mind, and it is entrapping and shackling by nature like quicksand or quagmire which sucks anyone in if one puts a leg into it even inadvertently. How can the cosmic Atma for which the whole creation is a habitat, which is all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent, immanent and ethereal by nature limit itself to a gross body or the gross brick-and-mortar house that ignorant people call a 'home' ?]

He has no attachment or attractions for anything or anyone; he is not infatuated with them. He is immaculate and sinless. He has no anger and wrathfulness in him. He is an expert in the laws of proper conduct and well-versed in the knowledge of the Truth. He is wise, realised and enlightened. (6)

प्रीति सदा सज्जन संसर्गा । तृन सम बिषय स्वर्ग अपबर्गा ॥ ७ ॥

prīti sadā sajjana sansargā. tṛna sama biṣaya svarga apabargā. 7.

He finds pleasure and happiness in the company of saints, of holy and pious people. He treats all things of the material world of sense objects as being worthless as a reed or grass. For him, the heaven and the world are equal.

[This is primarily because he has realised that the ultimate spiritual truth in this creation is known as the Atma. This Atma is a cosmic ethereal entity known as Consciousness that resides in his own bosom and no where else, that it is this Atma residing in his own self which is also called the Holy Spirit, the Parmatma, the Supreme Being, whom the world calls the Lord God, and that there is no such thing as a separate heaven somewhere in the sky where he will go after death to enjoy some great privileges and physical comfort, or a distinct place called the world where he has to suffer while he lives in it. He realises that all suffering is his own creation; it is his mind that feels that this is causing pain and that is causing happiness. The heaven above is as illusory as the world under it. The reality is that when the Atma wants

to find freedom from all fetters, it can do so instantly by becoming detached from everything. When the body is shed, the Atma is physically liberated from its four walls. Freedom from bondages of spiritual ignorance and delusions is the actual symbolic form of Mukti, or liberation and deliverance, which gives immense happiness, joy, bliss and tranquility to the creature—a situation that is equated to being in heaven. The opposite situation would then obviously create unhappiness and misery. This is equivalent to suffering in this world.] (7)

भगति पच्छ हठ नहिं सठताई । दुष्ट तर्क सब दूरि बहाई ॥ ८ ॥

bhagati paccha haṭha nahim saṭhatā'ī. duṣṭa tarka saba dūri bahā'ī. 8.

Saints prefer to follow the path of Bhakti—having love, devotion, dedication, faith and trust for the Lord God. He keeps a great distance from those who are wicked, evil and pervert, as well as from aimless debates and useless logics that make no sense and are a waste of time and energy. (8)

दो०. मम गुन ग्राम नाम रत गत ममता मद मोह ।
ता कर सुख सोइ जानइ परानंद संदोह ॥ ४६ ॥

dōhā.

mama guna grāma nāma rata gata mamatā mada mōha.
tā kara sukha sō'i jāna'i parānanda sandōha. 46.

Only those who remain submerged in the nectar representing my countless virtues and the spiritual ambrosia of my holy name (i.e. always remember them and repeats my divine name), and are free from the entanglements of Mamta (worldly attachments and affections), the tainting effects of Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy, pride of being superior to others, ego), and the fetters of Moha (worldly attractions and infatuations)—verily, such saints know and are able to taste the divine nectar of bliss and happiness of the highest order (that comes naturally with practicing of the above eclectic virtues).” (Doha no. 46)

[Note—The glories of Lord Ram’s holy and divine name have been elaborately narrated in nearly all the magnificent devotional books on the theme of Lord Ram written by Goswami Tulsidas. A summary is as follows—

- (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 19 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 1, right upto Doha no. 27.
- (ii) Dohawali, verse nos. 1-47, 57-63, 80-81, 95-100, 102-116, 126-140, 150-152, 187.
- (iii) Barvai Ramayan, verse nos. 45-69.
- (iv) Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 1-125.
- (v) Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 40, 42, 44-46.
- (vi) Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 4356, 65-70.

This entire collection has been presented in English by this author in his epic book titled ‘Biography of Lord Ram and the glory of Lord’s Holy Name’, in section 2 of this book.]

(6.4) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 62:

The Lord God cannot be attained without one having love and affection for him even though he may be practicing other spiritual paths such as doing Yoga (meditation) or Yagya (sacrifices of various denominations):

चौ०. मिलहिं न रघुपति बिनु अनुरागा । किऐँ जोग तप ग्यान बिरागा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

milahim na raghupati binu anurāgā. ki'ēm' jōga tapa gyāna birāgā. 1.

[Lord Shiva further advised Garud as follows—] Lord Ram, who is also known as “Raghupati, the Lord of the Raghu kings”, is not to be found or accessed except by having true virtues of love and affection for the Lord God even if one practices a lot of Yoga (meditation), Tapa (austerity and penance), Gyan (acquisition of knowledge of the scriptures and become learned) or Vairagya (renunciation).

[To wit, the only one and simple way to the Lord God is the path of love and devotion for him. Here, Lord Shiva has quietly warned Garud to remember this one simple formula if he wishes to know who Lord Ram actually is—and it is to have true love and devotion for the Lord. For otherwise, no matter how hard he tries, the access to the truth of the Lord would always elude him, and he would always be denied the real spiritual benefit that one gets by worshipping the Lord.] (1)

(6.5) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 74 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it:

सुनहु राम कर सहज सुभाऊ । जन अभिमान न राखहिं काऊ ॥ ५ ॥
संसृत मूल सूलप्रद नाना । सकल सोक दायक अभिमाना ॥ ६ ॥

sunahu rāma kara sahaja subhā'ū. jana abhimāna na rākhahim kā'ū. 5.
sansṛta mūla sūlaprada nānā. sakala sōka dāyaka abhimānā. 6.

Listen to the innate habit and natural disposition of Lord Ram: he never tolerates the negative trait of ‘Abhimaan’ (pride, ego and haughtiness) in his followers and subordinates (i.e. his devotees). (5)

The reason is that ‘Abhiman’ is at the root of one getting entangled in the gross mortal world of transmigration, and this negative traits causes immense and interminable suffering, grief, misery and pain to a creature. (6)

ताते करहिं कृपानिधि दूरी । सेवक पर ममता अति भूरी ॥ ७ ॥
जिमि सिसु तन बन होइ गोसाईं । मातु चिराव कठिन की नाई ॥ ८ ॥

tātē karahim krpānidhi dūrī. sēvaka para mamatā ati bhūrī. 7.
jimi sisu tana brana hō'i gōsā'īm. mātu cirāva kaṭhina kī nā'īm. 8.

This is the reason the most merciful Lord removes this negative trait from his devotees and followers (“sēvaka”) immediately as the Lord has exceptional affection for them and would do everything to protect them from any harm¹. (7)

Oh respected Lord (“gōsā'īm”—i.e. Garud)! It is just like the case of a child developing a sore boil on his body when his loving mother would get it operated and removed inspite of this procedure causing a lot of transient pain to the child². (8)

[¹To wit, the merciful Lord nips the trouble in the bud by taking necessary steps to eradicate this negativity from his devotee. Though at first it may cause a lot of heartburn in the afflicted person, but like a good doctor the Lord prefers this than to let his devotee suffer an irreparable damage and a lot of torment in the long run.

The celestial sage Narad too had once developed ‘Abhimaan’ in him. The occasion was Narad wishing to marry a pretty girl inspite of being an exalted sage and one who had vowed to renounce all attractions for sensual pleasures. Lord Vishnu tried to warn him from falling prey to this trap by indicating to him about his excellent virtues for which Narad was so dear to the Lord and was revered by the whole world. So the Lord praised him for his excellent virtues of renunciation, possession of knowledge, self-control over his senses and devotion for the Lord amongst others so as to hint to Narad to be careful. But since Narad was overcome by passion, he did not understand the hidden meaning of the Lord’s praise, but rather became very proud that the Supreme Lord has praised him. The Lord did not like it, and to ensure Narad remains free from this, he manoeuvred things in such a way that Narad could not marry. This entire story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to 139.

But more specifically to our topic, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 129 where Lord Vishnu has thought to himself that he needs to remove ‘Abhimaan’ from the mind and heart of Narad.

As far as delusions and getting distracted by them being the cause of countless sorrows, miseries, grief and pain is concerned, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 121 along with Chaupai line nos. 28-37 that precede it.

²This is explained further in the following Doha no. 74. The mother holds her breath and pays no attention to the child’s yelling and throwing fits while the doctor removes the boil, but she knows that it is for the long-term good for her beloved infant. The momentary stern behaviour of the mother while she hold the child as he kicks and yells in pain while the boil is being attended to by the doctor does not mean that she is merciless or wishes the child to suffer, but she has the future of the child in mind. Likewise, the merciful Lord Ram too pays no attention to the momentary agitation that his devotee undergoes while the Lord creates a condition whereby his negative traits are destroyed. It often happens that in the process it is the Lord who himself has to suffer and take the blame, as it happened in the case of Narad who had cursed Lord Vishnu when the latter did not allow him to fall in the trap of temptations caused by libido, passion and lust when Narad wanted to marry a girl as narrated in the verses cited in note no. 1 herein above. The Lord took the curse cheerfully and in his stride, and he did not become angry on Narad, just like the mother who smilingly copes with

the tantrums thrown by the child, his kicking and biting and yelling as she holds him tightly while the surgeon treats the boil.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 43 where Lord Ram has told Narad precisely this thing—that he treats his devotees like a mother treats her infant child, and therefore it is his responsibility to take proper care of them and see to it that their happiness is not compromised.]

दो०. जदपि प्रथम दुख पावइ रोवइ बाल अधीर ।

ब्याधि नास हित जननी गनति न सो सिसु पीर ॥ ७४ (क) ॥

dōhā.

jadapi prathama dukha pāva'i rōva'i bāla adhīra.

byādhi nāsa hita jananī ganati na sō sisu pīra. 74 (a).

Though the child suffers immense pain and becomes very agitated in the beginning due to his ailment, the kind and loving mother does not pay any heed to it because it is for the child's own good that his disease is cured. (Doha no. 74-a).

तिमि रघुपति निज दास कर हरहिं मान हित लागि ।

तुलसिदास ऐसे प्रभुहि कस न भजहु भ्रम त्यागि ॥ ७४ (ख) ॥

timi raghupati nija dāsa kara harahim māna hita lāgi.

tulasidāsa aisē prabhuhi kasa na bhajahu bhrama tyāgi. 74 (b).

Similarly, Lord Raghunath (Sri Ram) removes the sense of pride and ego from his servants ("nija dāsa"—i.e. his faithful and loving devotees, followers and subordinates who are dependent upon him) because it is for their own good and welfare.

Tulsidas asserts—'Why should one not abandon all kinds of delusions and doubts, and instead adore, worship and have devotion for such a Lord who is so exceptionally kind, gracious, benevolent and merciful that he is so concerned about the good and well-being of his devotees.'¹ (Doha no. 74-b)

[¹To wit, it is in the interest of the devotee himself to have unwavering devotion and faith in such a gracious Lord as Sri Ram who is so worried about the welfare of his devotees that he would not let any negative trait remain in him so that the happiness in the future of the devotee is assured. Say, who would not like to have such a Lord for himself; who would not admire this quality in his Master?

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 43.

The saintly-crow Kaagbhusund has essentially said in the aforesaid verses that it is the innate habit and natural disposition of Lord Ram: he never tolerates the negative trait of 'Abhimaan' (pride, ego) in his followers and subordinates (i.e. his devotees). The reason is that 'Abhiman' is at the root of one getting entangled in the gross mortal

world of transmigration, and this negative traits causes immense and interminable suffering, grief, misery and pain to a creature. This is the reason the most merciful Lord removes this negative trait from his devotees and followers (“sēvaka”) immediately as the Lord has exceptional affection for them and would do everything to protect them from any harm.

(6.6) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 78 along with Chaupai line no. 3 that follows it:

The creature’s miseries and torments associated with life in this mortal and mundane world cannot be eliminated without worshipping and having devotion for the Lord God:

दो०. रामचंद्र के भजन बिनु जो चह पद निर्बान ।
ग्यानवंत अपि सो नर पसु बिनु पूँछ बिषान ॥ ७८ (क) ॥

dōhā.

rāmacandra kē bhajana binu jō caha pada nirbāna.
gyānavanta api sō nara pasu binu pūṁcha biṣāna. 78 (a).

If a person wants to attain the highest state of transcendental existence that is equivalent to having liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation without doing ‘Bhajan’¹ of Lord Ram-Chandra, then surely and without gainsay he deemed to be utterly stupid and extremely ignorant; such a thinking would make him highly anomalous inspite of the fact that he may be otherwise highly qualified in other fields of knowledge, and may be wise and learned too.

Such a person is like an animal that has no tail or horns. This animal becomes a subject of great mockery, ridicule and derision. Likewise, a person who thinks that he can attain the exalted state of transcendental existence and attain eternal peace without following the path of Bhajan of Lord Ram lives in a fool’s paradise². (Doha no. 78-a)

[¹The term used in the text is “Bhajana”. This word has a broad meaning as it incorporates within its ambit such virtues as devotion, faith, affection, admiration, reverence and love for Lord God. Worshipping the Lord, remembering the Lord, listening to and narrating his divine stories and deeds, selflessly serving the Lord, repeating his holy name and meditating on him, spreading the Lord’s words and ideals, teaching others about them and initiating them into the path of the Lord, and all such related deeds and spiritual exercises are different forms of doing Bhajan. Of course, in general terms, ‘devotion for Lord God’ is usually taken to mean doing Bhajan in a broad sense. This is because devotion itself has many varieties and connotations as explained by Lord Ram to Sabari in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36.

²It is impossible to attain spiritual bliss, beatitude and felicity, it is impractical to attain eternal peace and blessedness, and it is not feasible to get salvation and emancipation for the soul without having devotion for Lord Ram, and without surrendering oneself before the holy feet of the Lord.]

राकापति षोडस उअहिं तारागन समुदाइ ।

सकल गिरिन्ह दव लाइअ बिनु रबि राति न जाइ ॥ ७८ (ख) ॥

rākāpati ṣōṛasa u'ahim tārāgana samudā'i.

sakala girinha dava lā'i'a binu rabi rāti na jā'i. 78 (b).

It is just like the case that even though the full moon shines with all the sixteen aspects of its brilliance in full splendour, with all the millions of stars lending their own light to it, they cannot remove the darkness of the night as the single sun can do as soon as it rises¹. (Doha no. 78-b)

[¹To wit, no matter how hard a person tries to overcome Maya, no matter how many ways he adopts to accomplish success in this endeavour, he would fail unless he develops devotion for Lord Ram and focuses his mind on the Lord. This in due course would help him gain true knowledge of the Lord and his own self, i.e. about the Atma. As soon as he becomes self-realised and enlightened, all delusions would vanish, and this would be equivalent to attaining freedom from the snare of this gross world of sense objects that had pulled him towards its self for so long. He finds spiritual peace and happiness, and detachment from the world leads him onwards on the path of emancipation and salvation of his soul.]

चौ०. ऐसेहिं हरि बिनु भजन खगेसा । मिटइ न जीवन्ह केर कलेसा ॥ १ ॥

हरि सेवकहि न व्याप अबिद्या । प्रभु प्रेरित व्यापइ तेहि बिद्या ॥ २ ॥

caupā'i.

aisēhim hari binu bhajana khagēsā. miṭa'i na jīvanha kēra kalēsā. 1.

hari sēvakahi na byāpa abidyā. prabhu prērita byāpa'i tēhi bidyā. 2.

[Referring to the instances cited in Doha no. 78-b, Kaagbhusund told Garud—] Oh the King of Birds (khagēsā)! In the same manner (as the examples cited by me in Doha no. 78-b herein above), a Jiva's (living being's) miseries, torments and griefs related to life in this gross mortal world of transmigration cannot be mitigated or overcome without 'Bhaja'¹ of Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, who had manifested as Lord Ram). (1)

'Avidya' (lack of true knowledge; ignorance or lack of awareness of spiritual truth and reality) does not have any influence on the Sevak (follower, devotee, one who serves the Lord selflessly)² of Lord Hari.

On the contrary, by the grace of the Lord, only 'Vidya' (knowledge of the spiritual truth and Brahm, the supreme Consciousness; spiritual awareness; self-

realisation with its attendant bliss and beatitude) can have its sway on the Lord's Sevak³. (2)

[¹The term 'Bhajan' has already been explained in a note appended to Doha no. 78-a herein above.

²The term 'Sevak' has been explained in a note appended to Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 76 of this Book.

³To wit, the Lord ensures that his devotee is never tormented by the negative effects of Avidya. The Lord's devotee is always blissful and happy in the shadow of the Lord's grace and benevolence, and this state of beatitude and joy is similar to the one that is attained by acclaimed sages and saints upon self-realisation and Brahman-realisation even though the former, i.e. the Sevak of the Lord, may not be aware of his achievement. It comes to him unasked for; it's the Lord's gift to him.

The benefit that accrues to a devotee of Lord Ram is highlighted in the next verse.]

ताते नास न होइ दास कर । भेद भगति बाढ़इ बिहंगबर ॥ ३ ॥

tātē nāsa na hō'i dāsa kara. bhēda bhagati bāṛha'i bihaṅgabara. 3.

Oh the most exalted amongst the birds ("bihaṅgabara"—i.e. Garud)! This is the reason why a 'Dāsa' of the Lord (i.e. a devotee and follower of the Lord, one who serves the Lord selflessly) does not fall from his path; he does not come to ruin as he is not subjected to distractions, temptations or worldly delusions that are caused by Avidya.

Apart from this benefit (of remaining free from all the miseries associated with Avidya), his level of Bhakti (devotion for the Lord) goes on steadily rising (by the grace of the Lord), and this exponential increase of Bhakti would automatically bring its natural rewards for him (i.e. the obedient servant, the devotee and the follower of the Lord God). (3)

(6.6) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Chaupai line no 1 that precedes Doha no. 88:

There is no better reward in this world for any living being than to be blessed with the glorious and ever-green spiritual asset of 'Bhakti'. In the epic Ram Charit Manas we read that the saintly crow Kaagbhusund has asked Lord Ram to bless him with the boon of everlasting Bhakti for the Lord. The Lord was very pleased at this choice of Kaagbhusund, so he not only granted his wish but also told him that all the imaginable good virtues would now onwards dwell inside him, he would not be affected by delusions of any kind, and he would have an eternal life marked by bliss and wisdom. The Lord also reaffirmed his commitment towards his devotees when he told Kaagbhusund that Bhaktas (the Lord's devotees) are eternally dear to him, and he loves them more than anything else.

भगति हीन गुन सब सुख ऐसे । लवन बिना बहु बिंजन जैसे ॥ ५ ॥
 भजन हीन सुख कवने काजा । अस बिचारि बोलेउँ खगराजा ॥ ६ ॥

bhagati hīna guna saba sukha aisē. lavana binā bahu binjana jaisē. 5.
 bhajana hīna sukha kavanē kājā. asa bicāri bōlē'um^५ khagarājā. 6.

Without Bhakti (devotion for the Lord God) all other virtues and qualities are like food that has no salt in it. To wit, just like food tastes bland and insipid without salt, all other virtues and blessings that the Lord may grant to me are worthless and futile and not worth any effort if he does not bless me with the grandest virtue of having Bhakti for him. (5)

What is the use of, and what purpose will be served by having all sorts of joys and happiness in life in this world if one has no devotion for the Lord in one's heart, if one's mind is not devoted to worshipping, honouring and remembering Lord Ram¹.

Thinking thus, oh the king of birds (Garud), I replied to the Lord --- (6)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precede Doha no. 95—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 96 where Kaagbhusund has told Garud that he loves his body of a 'crow' as it is in this body that he had been blessed with Bhakti for Lord Ram.

The importance of Bhakti has been stressed by Kaagbhusund elsewhere also during his conversation with Garud which is in the form of a spiritual discourse. For instance, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 115; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 119; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 7-19 that precede Doha no. 122.]

जौं प्रभु होइ प्रसन्न बर देहू । मो पर करहु कृपा अरु नेहू ॥ ७ ॥
 मन भावत बर मागउँ स्वामी । तुम्ह उदार उर अंतरजामी ॥ ८ ॥

jauṁ prabhu hō'i prasanna bara dēhū. mō para karahu kṛpā aru nēhū. 7.
 mana bhāvata bara māga'um^८ svāmī. tumha udāra ura antarajāmī. 8.

'Oh Lord, if you are so pleased with me that you are ready to grant any boon to me that I would like to have, and if you do have so much affection and mercy for me that you would willingly fulfil my wish, --- (7)

--- Then I shall ask you for something that I would really like to have, something that I truly am fond of and yearn for. Oh Lord, you are a most magnanimous and gracious giver of all, and being all-knowing you are also aware of my inner thoughts. [To wit oh Lord, since you are "antarajāmī", i.e. one who lives in the inner-self of all living beings, and therefore is aware of all thoughts, notions, feeling, sentiments and emotions of the creature, there is nothing hidden from you. You will immediately know whether what I am about to seek from you now is indeed my true wish and coming out straight from the inner core of my heart, or if it is just a pretension on my part to look nice and good to you in my cunning attempt to please you and seek something more valuable and better from you by way of a boon.] (8)

दो०. अबिरल भगति बिसुद्ध तव श्रुति पुरान जो गाव ।
जेहि खोजत जोगीस मुनि प्रभु प्रसाद कोउ पाव ॥ ८४ (क) ॥

dōhā.

abirala bhagati bisud'dha tava śruti purāna jō gāva.
jēhi khōjata jōgīsa muni prabhu prasāda kō'u pāva. 84 (a).

That undiluted and prisine pure form of Bhakti (devotion) of yours which is steady and uninterrupted, and about which the Vedas and Purans have always sung (i.e. have espoused, honoured and lauded)¹, that Bhakti which is searched for by so many exalted and acclaimed sages, ascetics and hermits but only a few amongst them, upon whom you are gracious and pleased, are able to access --- (Doha no. 84-a)

[¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45 where Lord Ram has himself asserted that the eternal importance and value of Bhakti has been praised and sung by the Vedas and the Purans, i.e. by the ancient scriptures.]

भगत कल्पतरु प्रनत हित कृपा सिंधु सुख धाम ।
सोइ निज भगति मोहि प्रभु देहु दया करि राम ॥ ८४ (ख) ॥

bhagata kalpataru pranata hita kṛpā sindhu sukha dhāma.
sō'i nija bhagati mōhi prabhu dēhu dayā kari rāma. 84 (b).

Oh gracious and merciful Lord Ram who is like the Kalpa Tree (the all wish-fulfilling tree of the gods) for his devotees (bhagata kalpataru), who is the benevolent well-wisher of those who surrender before you and take refuge and shelter in your holy feet (pranata hita), who is like an ocean of mercy, grace, compassion and kindness (kṛpā sindhu), and who is an embodiment of eternal bliss and happiness (sukha dhāma)—please be kind and merciful enough to grant me that 'Bhakti' of yours.'

[To wit oh Lord, I don't want anything. I am contented to be near you and have the privilege of playing with you like I was a close and dear friend of yours. The fact that you have acknowledged my love for you and reciprocated it with your own love for me is sufficient enough of a reward for me. You have blessed me by placing your hands on my head; you have shown me your cosmic form that rarely any living being has ever seen or would ever see. You have given me free access to you. Them, to cap them all, you are ready to grant anything I wish. What more would I want?

But in case you insist that you do want to give me some kind of gift, then give me something of real value that I would cherish for life, and it is the boon of having undiluted and eternal devotion for you. The other things you mentioned can be granted by other gods if I cared for any of them, but 'Bhakti for Lord Ram' is something so exclusive that it can be granted only by Lord Ram himself and no one else!

Therefore, if you really want to give me some gift, give me your Bhakti; otherwise I am happy, and 'Thank You'!] (Doha no. 84-b)

चौ०. एवमस्तु कहि रघुकुलनायक । बोले बचन परम सुखदायक ॥ १ ॥
सुनु बायस तैं सहज सयाना । काहे न मागसि अस बरदाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēvamastu kahi raghukulanāyaka. bōlē bacana parama sukhadāyaka. 1.
sunu bāyasa tair̥ sahaja sayānā. kāhē na māgasi asa baradānā. 2.

Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghu's line of kings of Ayodhya (raghukulanāyaka) gave his consent by saying "ēvamastu", i.e. 'so be it; it shall be as you desire'. Saying this, the Lord spoke words that were supremely pleasant and gave joy to Kaagbhusund. (1)

The Lord said, 'Oh Crow (bāyasa); listen! You are very wise and intelligent; why then would you have not sought this blessing or blessing from me? [You could have opted for many other things, but you were wise to select Bhakti instead. Surely this proves you are wiser than most of others whom I have ever approached for fulfilling their wishes.]¹ (2)

[¹To wit, only a person who is exceptionally intelligent and wise would use the given opportunity most meaningfully. The Lord had offered so many boons to Kaagbhusund but the latter realised that they are all useless if he is not granted Bhakti. This is because Kaagbhusund knew that the quality of Bhakti is very dear to Lord Ram, and so he reasoned that by having Bhakti he would also endear himself to the Lord in a subtle way. And by the Lord's own admission, Kaagbhusund succeeded in his plan.

In fact, Lord Ram had himself praised Bhakti when he went to Sabari's hermitage during his forest sojourn. He had clearly told her that since she had it she was very dear to him. To prove this point, the Lord had performed her last rites as if he was her son. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 36.

Another instance similar to that of Kaagbhusund seeking the boon of Bhakti from Lord Ram is found when the seven celestial sages known as Sankadi had gone to pray and offer their obeisance to Lord Ram; they had also asked for the grant of Bhakti. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 35. Sankadi sages have also praised Bhakti while asking for this blessing.]

सब सुख खानि भगति तैं मागी । नहिं जग कोउ तोहि सम बड़भागी ॥ ३ ॥
जो मुनि कोटि जतन नहिं लहहीं । जे जप जोग अनल तन दहहीं ॥ ४ ॥

saba sukha khāni bhagati tair̥ māgī. nahir̥ jaga kō'u tōhi sama barabhāgī. 3.
jō muni kōṭi jatana nahir̥ lahahīr̥. jē japa jōga anala tana dahahīr̥. 4.

You have asked for the boon of having 'Bhakti' (devotion for Lord God) which is indeed a fountain or a mine of all sorts of bliss and happiness in life. Really, there is no one as lucky and fortunate (as well as wise) as you are¹. (3)

Bhakti is a boon that not even great sages and hermits usually get even after doing a lot of strenuous religious efforts such as doing constant Japa (i.e. repetition of

the holy name of the Lord by restraining the mind from any other thought, something that is very difficult to practice), Yoga (meditation along with reflection and contemplation), and enduring other physical discomforts such as letting the body suffer by subjecting it to the heat of a raging fire during fire sacrifices or doing a form of Yoga known as Hata Yoga. (4)

[¹To wit, people seek all sorts of worldly boons and temporal gifts if they are given a chance to ask for one. Some ask for wealth, some seek fame and powers, some want a son and prosperous family, and others want good health, success in endeavours, and so on. Some amongst them who are enlightened may ask for Mukti or Moksha, i.e. for liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. But Mukti or Moksha comes only when one dies, and there may be many a sacrifices, meritorious deeds or strenuous efforts that one would have to make to achieve this noble goal while one is alive.

Not even great sages and hermits get this blessing even though they suffer so much to acquire spiritual merit. They are like an adult son for me, and like a mother is not too worried about her grown-up children as they are able to take care of themselves, I too am not unduly worried about the spiritual welfare of great sages, seers, hermits and ascetics because I know that their future is secure, that they would certainly get liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation based on the strength of their great sacrifices, penances, austerities, religious practices and spiritually meritorious deeds. But in case of those who seek Bhakti, I become especially concerned as they are like my infant children.

There are innumerable instances in Ram Charit Manas where the importance and significance of Bhakti has been highlighted. Some of instances are the following: (a) Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 45; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 84; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 79; (iv) Doha no. 122 along with Chaupai line nos. 7, 12-14 that precede it; (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 119; and (b) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4-10 that precede Doha no. 43.

It is rare that anyone would seek the virtue of 'Bhakti' or devotion for me inspite of my declaration that Bhakti is very dear to me—see the next Chaupai no. 5 herein below. The blessing of Bhakti helps the person to lead a high quality of life in this world that is marked by spiritual bliss, happiness and carefreeness even while he goes about the routine affairs of life in an ordinary way like his other peers because once he has Bhakti in him his welfare and good become my concern—for I treat a person who has Bhakti as a mother treats her child. I personally feel obliged to take care of all his needs and free him of all worries. He need not exert himself in making special efforts to lead an auspicious life or do meritorious deeds or perform strenuous religious rites in order to gain spiritual merit, for all spiritual rewards come to him automatically and without any discomfort.

Therefore, apart from living a happy, blissful and carefree life, a person who has Bhakti in him is assured of Mukti or Moksha at the time of his death. So he has the best of both the worlds—he enjoys a peaceful and happy life while he is alive, and at the same time he is assured of emancipation and salvation upon death. And both these rewards come to him without effort and worries.]

रीझेउँ देखि तोरि चतुराई । मागेहु भगति मोहि अति भाई ॥ ५ ॥

सुनु बिहंग प्रसाद अब मोरें । सब सुभ गुन बसिहहि उर तोरें ॥ ६ ॥

rījhē'um' dēkhi tōri caturā'ī. māgēhu bhagati mōhi ati bhā'ī. 5.
 sunu bihaṅga prasāda aba mōrēm. saba subha guna basihahim ura tōrēm. 6.

I am truly pleased and enchanted by your sagacity and wisdom in that you have selected Bhakti as your blessing-of-choice, for Bhakti is also dear to me. [To wit, by asking for the blessing of Bhakti you have indirectly endeared yourself to me because Bhakti is liked by me as well. So by saying you would love to have Bhakti you have created a bond that is common between the two of us for I love Bhakti too. And this is why I am so amazed at your wisdom and cleverness for you have chosen something that would establish an eternal bond of love and affection between you and me.] (5)

Listen oh Bird (sunu bihaṅga)! By my blessings and grace, all the auspicious and noble qualities that exist in this world would now onwards reside in your heart. (6)

भगति ग्यान बिग्यान बिरागा । जोग चरित्र रहस्य बिभागा ॥ ७ ॥
 जानब तैं सबही कर भेदा । मम प्रसाद नहिं साधन खेदा ॥ ८ ॥

bhagati gyāna bigyāna birāgā. jōga caritra rahasya bibhāgā. 7.
 jānaba taim sabahī kara bhēdā. mama prasāda nahim sādhana khēdā. 8.

Bhakti (devotion), Gyan (spiritual wisdom and enlightenment), Vigyan (realisation of the self and cosmic Consciousness), Vairagya (true renunciation, dispassion, detachment etc.), Yoga (meditation), and the many secret aspects of my divine stories and forms with all their different connotations --- (7)

--- The esoteric knowledge of all will be known to you easily. By my grace and blessings, you will not have to endure any hardship or encounter any sort of difficulty in understanding these profound secrets¹. (8)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 114 where sage Lomus has blessed Kaagbhusund in a similar manner.]

दो०. माया संभव भ्रम सब अब न व्यापिहहिं तोहि ।
 जानेसु ब्रह्म अनादि अज अगुन गुनाकर मोहि ॥ ८५ (क) ॥

dōhā.

māyā sambhava bhrama saba aba na byāpihahim tōhi.
 jānēsu brahma anādi aja aguna gunākara mōhi. 85 (a).

Any kind of perplexity, doubt and confusion that owe their origin to Maya (delusions) would no longer affect you. [To wit, you will be free from their tainting and demeaning influences.]

Henceforth, realise that I (Lord Ram) is a personified form of the supreme Brahm who has no beginning, who is without a birth, and who has no attributes like

other living beings, but at the same time who is a treasury of all the best of auspicious virtues that exist in this creation¹. (Doha no. 85-a)

[¹It would seem, on the face of it, that it's like self-praise on the part of Lord Ram to call himself 'Brahm' and the 'Supreme Being'. Well, it is not that at all, as the Lord is merely reiterating what others, who themselves are knowledgeable, wise and enlightened, have said about the Lord.

Let us refer to some of these wise ones who have affirmed that Lord Ram is indeed the Supreme Being or Brahm himself. (i) Lord Shiva has told this fact to his consort Parvati in no uncertain terms, mincing no words to assert it—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51; (ii) The creator Brahma had told his son sage Vashitha the same thing—refer: Ram Charit Mans, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 48; (iii) Sage Kaagbhusund told Garud this fact to remove all his doubts which had vexed him for long—refer: Ram Charit Mans, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 72—to Doha no. 73.

When Lord Ram returned victorious to Ayodhya after the campaign of Lanka and the term of fourteen years of forest dwelling ended, he was crowned the King of the realm. At that time all the senior Gods had come to pay their obeisance and offer their tributes to him. These Gods included Brahma the creator and Shiva the concluder, both of whom are the senior-most Gods as they are the two Gods of the Trinity, the third being Lord Vishnu himself who was present in the form of Lord Ram, as well as Indra who is the King of Gods. Then the Vedas, the primary scriptures, had also come in a personified form to pay their respects and pray to Lord Ram. These Gods and the Vedas would not have come to bow their heads and offer their respects to an ordinary human king or emperor no matter how powerful and renowned he may have been. Obviously therefore, the 'King' to whom they had come to pay their respects was clearly not a human being by any count. To wit, Lord Ram was the Lord whom all the Gods and the Vedas praise and are junior to. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 12—to Doha no. 14.

There are numerous other instances as well in the Book "Ram Charit Manas" where this irrefutable fact is stressed. For instance, (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 50; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 126 along with Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it; (iii) Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 26 to cite a few.]

चौ०. अब सुनु परम बिमल मम बानी । सत्य सुगम निगमादि बखानी ॥ १ ॥
निज सिद्धांत सुनावउँ तोही । सुनु मन धरु सब तजि भजु मोही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

aba sunu parama bimala mama bānī. satya sugama nigamādi bakhānī. 1.
nija sid'dhānta sunāva'um̐ tōhī. sunu mana dharu saba taji bhaju mōhī. 2.

Lord Ram said to sage Kaagbhusund—'Now, listen to my sacred (holy and divine) words or teachings which are truthful, easy to understand, and are in consonance with and echoing the eclectic principles laid out in the ancient scriptures such as the Vedas, the Purans etc. ('Nigamaadi')¹. (1)

I shall tell you the fundamental principles as concluded by me (i.e. as deduced, determined and decided by me, the Supreme Being who has created these scriptures, and therefore what I say is the final word on the essential meaning of the teachings of the scriptures).

Listen carefully and enshrine them in your heart and mind. Discard everything else, and worship me, have unwavering devotion for me, be dedicated to me, and inculcate faith and love for me (as a sure-shot means for your spiritual well-being, welfare and good)². (2)

[¹Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being, and hence his words can't be anything other than holy, divine, sacred and truthful.

The scriptures are very voluminous, complicated and labyrinthine; highly erudite and learned sages and seers have spent their entire lifetimes trying to read them fully, understand them and decipher their teachings. They are thus beyond the means and reach and understanding and practical use for the ordinary creature. This problem was realised by the Supreme Lord, so he decided to make them easy to understand for the common person and present their essential teachings in simple and straightforward language.

²To wit, always remember what I tell you now. Imprint my sacred words firmly and indelibly in your sub-conscious. Make a firm resolution that they will invariably act as your moral guide, advisor and teacher in all the decisions your mind and heart make while dealing with all imaginable and all the variable aspects of life. If you follow me closely and implement my teachings, you will not have to look any further for spiritual and moral guidance and advice.]

मम माया संभव संसारा । जीव चराचर बिबिधि प्रकारा ॥ ३ ॥

सब मम प्रिय सब मम उपजाए । सब ते अधिक मनुज मोहि भाए ॥ ४ ॥

mama māyā sambhava sansārā. jīva carācara bibidhi prakārā. 3.

saba mama priya saba mama upajā'ē. saba tē adhika manuja mōhi bhā'ē. 4.

This creation is the result of my Maya (delusion creating powers). This creation has countless varieties of Jivas (living beings), such as those that are mobile ('Char') and those that are immobile ('Achar')¹. (3)

All of them are equally dear to me, and all of them have been created by me (or born out of me as my image). But out of all of them, those who are born as human beings are comparatively dearer to me². (4)

[¹This creation is created by the supreme Brahm using his delusion-creating powers. For this purpose, Brahm has employed three basic Gunas or qualities in creation—the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna, and the Tama Guna. Hence, this Maya is also known as 'Trigunmai Maya' or a Maya that has three-components. This esoteric concept has been explained in a note that accompanies Doha no. 41 of Uttar Kand above.

The living world has both types of living beings—those who can move, for instance the members of the animal kingdom who are studied under the zoological stream in modern science, and those who can't move, such as the members of the plant kingdom who are studied under the botanical stream.

²This idea has been reiterated elsewhere by Lord Ram—viz. Ram Charit Manas: (i) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43 when the Lord had taught the citizens of Ayodhya he has said exactly the same thing. (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 87 where Lord Ram reasserts this fact to sage Kaagbhusund as stated in the present line.

Why so? This question has been answered by Kaagbhusund himself in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 121. He tells Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu who had come seeking knowledge to the saint) that—“There is no other form (body) that is as good and desirable as the body of the human being. All the creatures of this world consisting of inanimate as well as animate things yearn to acquire it. The human body is the stepping stone to attain both the heaven as well as the hell. It is also the mean by which a creature can hope to find his final liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration in this world. It also grants Gyan, Vairagya and Bhakti. {That is, the Jiva can obtain these three fruits of truthful spiritual knowledge as enshrined in the scriptures, practice the eclectic virtues of renunciation, detachment and dispassion, as well as devotion, dedication and submission for the Lord God through the medium of the human body.} If a Jiva is stupid enough not to properly use this golden opportunity to worship the Supreme Being and have devotion for the Lord to ensure their secure destiny and spiritual well-being then they are like the idiot who throws a precious gem to grab a worthless piece of glass.”

Lord Ram has told Hanuman that though he is neutral towards all in this creation, but still he has a soft corner for his devotees—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 4.]

तिन्ह महँ द्विज द्विज महँ श्रुतिधारी । तिन्ह महँ निगम धरम अनुसारी ॥ ५ ॥
तिन्ह महँ प्रिय बिरक्त पुनि ग्यानी । ग्यानिहु ते अति प्रिय बिग्यानी ॥ ६ ॥

tinha maham̐ dvija dvija maham̐ śrutidhārī. tinha mahum̐ nigama dharama anusārī. 5.

tinha maham̐ priya birakta puni gyānī. gyāniḥu tē ati priya bigyānī. 6.

[All humans are not the same; some are naturally good and righteous, while others are vile and sinful. So the Lord obviously does not mean that he loves even sinners and vile persons simply because they are ‘humans’. Its nonsense and incredulous to believe it to be so! So he clarifies his position and elaborates further—]

Amongst the humans, I favour and hold dear the Dwijs (Brahmins). Even amongst them I favour and hold dear those who are expert in the knowledge of the Vedas.

Out of them, those who practice the teaching of these sacred scriptures in their own lives, those who lead a life according to the tenets of Dharma (principles of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, morality, spirituality etc. as universally taught by all the scriptures), are more favoured by me and dearer to me¹.

[¹To wit, though all elderly and learned Brahmins are favoured by me, but I prefer those who have an in-depth understanding of the essential meaning and teaching of the scriptures, who implement these teachings in their own lives, who are competent and selfless enough to show the rest of the society the path of Dharma by

teaching others their essence in a simple language, and in general act as torch-bearers of the sacred knowledge enshrined in the scriptures. I do not mean that I prefer any Brahmin because he is born in that race. Learning the scriptures does not mean memorizing them by rote-learning because it this sort of learning is as good as not knowing the scriptures at all. When I mean by saying 'I respect and honour Brahmins' I mean those amongst the Brahmins who are wise, learned and self-realised, those who exercise exemplary self-control over their sense organs, thoughts and words, those who practice in their personal lives what they preach or teach others about the scriptures, those who are sincere, honest, truthful and trustworthy, and those whose lives are worthy of emulation.] (5)

Out of them (i.e. those who have studied the scriptures and have an in-depth knowledge of their meaning), I prefer those who are 'Virakta'—i.e. those who have developed the eclectic spiritual virtue of 'Vairagya'. That is, I prefer those people amongst the learned Brahmins who have developed a sincere and honest sense of renunciation, detachment, dispassion and neutrality towards everything in the world, including their own gross body and its countless pleasures, as well as the external world of material sense objects and their infinite temptations².

[²What is the use of understanding the meaning of the scriptures if a man remains hankering for worldly gains and pecuniary objects? The scriptures tell him, inter alia, that everything in this world is perishable, that the only imperishable entity here is the Atma, the pure consciousness trapped in a gross body due to its past deeds, that true happiness and peace comes when this Atma is freed from this tangle, and that the world is like a spider's web which keeps the Atma trapped like the insect caught in this web and fed upon by the spider. The learned Brahmin preaches others this fact but himself yearns for all the things that the scriptures prohibit and which he himself tells other from a pseudo moral ground. Indeed he is a pretentious man, and therefore the Lord does not like him.]

Even amongst the Viraktas, I prefer those who are 'Gyanis'—i.e. who are wise, and have become enlightened and self-realised³.

[³Only those who have developed true realisation and enlightenment will be able to remain steady on the path of Vairagya or Virakti. The rest are prone to falter and fall by the wayside in the face of fierce and relentless onslaught of the world and its temptations.] (6)

तिन्ह ते पुनि मोहि प्रिय निज दासा । जेहि गति मोरि न दूसरि आसा ॥ ७ ॥

पुनि पुनि सत्य कहउँ तोहि पाहीं । मोहि सेवक सम प्रिय कोउ नाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

tinha tē puni mōhi priya nija dāsā. jēhi gati mōri na dūsari āsā. 7.

puni puni satya kaha'um' tōhi pāhīm. mōhi sēvaka sama priya kō'u nāhīm. 8.

[Having stressed the importance of Viragya and Gyan in the path of spiritual destiny, the Lord now lays stress on the virtue and glory of Bhakti, the eclectic virtues of devotion, dedication, submission, faith and love for the Lord God by saying that out of all the learned, wise and enlightened ones, he prefers those who have become his true followers, who serve the Lord selflessly and sincerely.]

Out of them (i.e. out of those who are Gyanis as mentioned in Chaupai line no. 6 above), I prefer those who serve me, for whom there is no other succour and solace, no other destiny and destination, and no other hope and help except me.

[To wit, I have a special soft corner in my heart for those wise ones who are completely and unequivocally dependent upon me, and have submitted themselves whole-heartedly before me.]¹ (7)

[In this Chaupai, the Lord repeats his declaration that he loves his devotees over all others to remove any confusions and doubts, as well as to stress this point.]

I repeatedly and truthfully (honestly, sincerely) say to you that no one is as dear to me as my devotee and those who serve me². (8)

[¹The same emotion is expressed by Lord Ram when Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king Ravana, had come to seek the Lord's refuge and protection—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 48 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it. Here, Lord Ram has especially invoked Kaagbhusund to say that anyone who comes seeking his refuge after abandoning all hopes from any other quarter, then he is hereby assured by the Lord that he is most welcome—refer especially to Chaupai line no. 1 in the above cited verses.

Sage Valmiki has also reiterated this virtue of total submission, faith, devotion and love for Lord Ram, being completely dependent upon the Lord for all the needs, both the spiritual as well as the temporal, and having no expectations of any kind from any other quarter in this world as a pre-requisite for the Lord being especially gracious upon a spiritual aspirant—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 129 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 130; (iii) Doha no. 131.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 46 where Lord Ram tells the citizens of Ayodhya that if a person claims to be his follower and dependant but looks elsewhere for help, say obviously then how he can claim it to be so: he is a liar, a pretentious man who is not telling the truth. Then the Lord asserts that he is easily pleased and feel obliged to a person who is really dependent upon him completely.

²The Lord has made a similar assertion earlier when the citizens had assembled to hear him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 43.

Now, this statement of Lord Ram that he gives special preference to those who serve him, must not be misconstrued to mean that he is acting arrogantly and preaching slavery. Not at all! Remember, he has reiterated in an open court when all the citizens had assembled to hear him that they should have no fear of him and are free to oppose him if they think that the Lord is saying anything wrong, improper, unholy or unrighteous—i.e. anything that goes against the principles of Dharma and the doctrines and teachings of the scriptures {refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 43}, that after listening to him there are free to decide what to do and what not to do {refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 43}, and that all of them are like his brothers {refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (a) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 43; (b) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45; and (c) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46}.

भगति हीन बिरंचि किन होई । सब जीवहु सम प्रिय मोहि सोई ॥ ९ ॥
 भगतिवंत अति नीचउ प्राणी । मोहि प्रानप्रिय असि मम बानी ॥ १० ॥

bhagati hīna birañci kina hō'ī. saba jīvahu sama priya mōhi sō'ī. 9.
 bhagativanta ati nīca'u prāñī. mōhi prānapriya asi mama bāñī. 10.

[Laying more stress of the grand virtue of Bhakti, the Lord continues—]

Even if someone as exalted and senior in creation as the creator Brahma himself lacks the divine virtue of Bhakti in him, then he is like all other ordinary Jivas (living beings) for me. [To wit, even Brahma, the creator, is like other ordinary beings for me if he lacks devotion and faith in me. I will continue to love him and take care of him in the routine way I take care and look after the rest of the creation, but he cannot expect me to show any special privilege to him or come to his rescue when he is surrounded by horrendous misfortunes howling like hungry bloodhounds baying for his blood.]¹ (9)

I tell you truthfully that if a creature has devotion for me and complete faith in me, then I love him like my life even though he may be most lowly and downtrodden in the hierarchy of creation². (10)

[¹Compare this line with the previous Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 86 of Uttar Kand in Ram Charit Manas. This comparison clearly indicate what the Lord means to say—it is that he takes care of the entire creation in a dispassionate manner like an emperor should without any prejudice or a partisan attitude. But like the emperor who is more concerned about those who attend to him closely, I too, being the Supreme Emperor, cannot neglect those who have complete devotion for me, who serve me diligently, faithfully and whole-heartedly. It does not mean I am biased; but tell me would it not be unfair to them if I do not give them any privilege or advantage over others who are not so loyal to me and who keep a distance from me. Remember—I won't neglect them; don't misunderstand me. I am duty-bound to take care of all of them—I have vowed it (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 7; and Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 86).

This idea that even if one has the body as exalted and honourable as the creator Brahma himself, it is of no use if the person does not have Bhakti or devotion for Lord Ram is reiterated by Kaagbhusund once again in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 96 where precisely the same thing is said.

²This is an important observation. All those who were fortunate enough to be graced by Lord Ram in the story of the Ramayana were low down in social and evolutionary hierarchy. Let us see who they are—

(i) The vulture Jatayu who was picked up the Lord onto his laps and his last rites (cremation) was done by the Lord himself—something his own father king Dasrath was denied—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Doha no. 30 to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 32; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 33.

(ii) Then there was Sabari, a woman who was born in a low caste and excommunicated by the society. The Lord cheerfully ate fruits offered by her,

preached her, and then gave her emancipation and salvation—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no.36. Here also, when she expressed her dilemma and extreme sense of regret that she is feeling reluctant or afraid to serve the Lord as she belonged to a low caste which forbids such service, and this will prevent her from fulfilling her life-long desire to serve the Lord when he arrived at her hermitage, the Lord told her that he respects only Bhakti as the only condition to accept anyone, and since she has this in abundance he is most willing to accept her hospitality—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 35; and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36.

(iii) Nishad was a boatman, but the Lord accepted him as his friend—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 104; Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 20.

(iv) Other shining examples are the monkeys such as Sugriv, the monkey king, whom also the Lord accepted as his friend—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Doha no. 4; (ii) Doha no. 5 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes it.

Then we have Hanuman, his most trusted devotee whom the Lord had affectionately embraced on more than one occasion—refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 4; (ii) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 33; and (iii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 62.

Lord Ram has proclaimed that Hanuman was dearer to him as compared to even his closest brother Laxman who had suffered the torments of the forest along with the Lord shoulder-to-shoulder—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 3.

Hanuman had risen above the rest of them all to the exalted stature in as much as that the Lord declared him to be his son towards whom he will always be indebted—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 32.

(v) Vibhishan, the demon brother of Ravana, the demon king, was also accepted by the Lord as his friend whom the Lord embraced affectionately—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 46, (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48, (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 49, etc.

Not privately, but the Lord had declared them to be his dear friends without whose support he would not have defeated the fierce enemy, the demons, openly before the huge crowd that had gathered to greet and welcome Lord Ram when he returned to Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 8.]

{Note—The summary of what the Lord said till now is this--“All the creatures in this world have been created by me (the Supreme Being known as Ram). I love them equally as all of them are my off-springs. Out of them, I love the humans more. Out of them, I prefer Dwij (Brahmins); out of them I prefer those who are well versed in the Vedas; out of such Brahmins I prefer those who actually follow the teachings of the Vedas (instead of just muttering their hymns and incantations); out of such Brahmins I prefer those who have developed Vairagya or renunciation and dispassion; out of them I prefer those who have gained ‘Gyan’ (knowledge of spiritual matters and

having wisdom); out of such people I prefer those who have ‘Vigyan’ (an in-depth clinical knowledge of spiritual matters, leading to self-realisation and enlightenment); and out of them I prefer those who are my ardent followers and are totally dependent upon me, for whom I am the only destination and refuge, the only source of succour and solace, and the only source of help and happiness. Even Brahma, the creator, is equal to an ordinary being for me if he has no Bhakti (devotion), while the humblest and lowly of all the creatures is dearest to me and closest to my heart if he has Bhakti in him.”}

दो०. सुचि सुसील सेवक सुमति प्रिय कहु काहि न लाग ।
श्रुति पुरान कह नीति असि सावधान सुनु काग ॥ ८६ ॥

dōhā.

suci susīla sēvaka sumati priya kahu kāhi na lāga.
śruti purāna kaha nīti asi sāvadhāna sunu kāga. 86.

Say, who does not like or favours a server or follower or subordinate who is of a pure heart, who is polite and courteous, and who is wise and intelligent.

[Lord Ram here justifies his earlier assertion that he has special place in his heart for his ardent devotees and followers. He puts a poser to those who may question the Lord’s declaration—saying in essence “Tell me, what will you do in my place? How do you intend to treat someone who is loyal, faithful and totally devoted to you; who will lay down his life for you or your cause; who is completely dependent upon you?”]

Listen attentively oh Crow (“sāvadhāna sunu kāga”)! All the great scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans affirm this principle (which I have just narrated to you). (Doha no. 86)

चौ०. एक पिता के बिपुल कुमारा । होहिं पृथक गुन सील अचारा ॥ १ ॥
कोउ पंडित कोउ तापस ग्याता । कोउ धनवंत सूर कोउ दाता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēka pitā kē bipula kumārā. hōhiṃ pṛthaka guna sīla acārā. 1.
kō'u paṇḍita kō'u tāpasa gyātā. kō'u dhanavanta sūra kō'u dātā. 2.

[Now, the Lord takes a simple example to bring home the point why he favours his ardent and faithful devotees as compared to other creatures in spite of the fact that all of them are his off-springs—]

Suppose a father has many sons. All of them have different qualifications and qualities, differing in nature, virtues, behaviour and attitude. (1)

One of them may be a Pandit (an expert in any vocation or profession or knowledge of the scriptures), another may be good at doing Tapa (practicing the principles of austerity, penance and suffering for some good cause), the third may be rich, the fourth may be physically strong and a brave warrior, and the fifth may be a

renowned philanthropic who is known for his charitable disposition and a magnanimous attitude as a liberal donor and alms giver. (2)

कोउ सर्बग्य धर्मरत कोई । सब पर पितहि प्रीति सम होई ॥ ३ ॥

कोउ पितु भगत बचन मन कर्मा । सपनेहुँ जान न दूसर धर्मा ॥ ४ ॥

kō'u sarbagya dharmarata kō'ī. saba para pitahi prīti sama hō'ī. 3.

kō'u pitu bhagata bacana mana karmā. sapanēhum' jāna na dūsara dharmā.

4.

One of his sons may be so mystically empowered and powerful that nothing is secret from him or unknown to him. The other son may be exalted as he diligently follows the principles of Dharma.

The father will love all of them equally and treat all of them equally. All of them have auspicious qualities that give good name to the father and the family. The father is happy with all of them, and blesses all of them. (3)

Now, suppose he has a son who is completely devoted to his father so much so that he serves him with his words, actions and deeds. This particular son knows of no other Dharma (good deed) that is greater or better than serving his father loyally, faithfully, diligently, truthfully, sincerely, honestly, and exclusively.

[To wit, this son is exceptionally obedient to his father. He treats his father as being equivalent to God. He is at the beck and call of the father, and is eagerly waiting for the father to ask him to do something which he willingly rushes to do to the best of his ability. He never murmurs or swears or grudges or tries to avoid attending to the needs of his beloved father. He does never use any word that might hurt his father in the least; he is eager to carry out his instructions cheerfully; he thinks that he is serving his Lord God by serving the father.] (4)

सो सुत प्रिय पितु प्रान समाना । जद्यपि सो सब भाँति अयाना ॥ ५ ॥

एहि बिधि जीव चराचर जेते । त्रिजग देव नर असुर समेते ॥ ६ ॥

अखिल बिस्व यह मोर उपाया । सब पर मोहि बराबरि दाया ॥ ७ ॥

तिन्ह महुँ जो परिहरि मद माया । भजै मोहि मन बच अरु काया ॥ ८ ॥

sō suta priya pitu prāna samānā. jadyapi sō saba bhām'ti ayānā. 5.

ēhi bidhi jīva carācara jētē. trijaga dēva nara asura samētē. 6.

akhila bisva yaha mōra upāyā. saba para mōhi barābari dāyā.

tinha maham' jō parihari mada māyā. bhajai mōhi mana baca aru kāyā. 4.

This particular son is exceedingly dear to the father even though he might lack in other qualities enumerated above (in Chaupai line nos. 1-3).

[Say, will he not be the most favoured son of the father; should the father not love him most dearly?] (5)

In a similar way, this entire creation consisting of animate as well as inanimate creatures—including the animals and birds ('Trijag'), the gods ('Deva'), the humans

(‘Nar) and the demons (‘Asur’) [6]—has been created by me; all of them are my offsprings. I have equal mercy and grace upon all of them [7]¹. (6-7).

Amongst all the creatures, they who abandon all sorts of negativity such as Mada (arrogance, haughtiness and ego) as well as Maya (delusions and their attendant deceit, pretensions and falsehoods), and instead develop the spiritual virtue of having sincere and true devotion, love, affection and faith in me—(8)

[¹Refer the same declaration of the Lord earlier in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 86 herein above.]

दो०. पुरुष नपुंसक नारि वा जीव चराचर कोइ ।
सर्व भाव भज कपट तजि मोहि परम प्रिय सोइ ॥ ८७ (क) ॥

dōhā.

puruṣa napunsaka nāri vā jīva carācara kō'i.
sarba bhāva bhaja kapaṭa taji mōhi parama priya sō'i. 87 (a).

—Verily I declare that no matter which form of birth they have got in this world, to whichever denomination in the hierarchy of creation they belong, be it as a man, an impotent person, a woman, or any other Jiva (creature), whether one who has mobility (such as animals and birds) or one who can't move (such as plants or lower members of the animal kingdom)—I love them most dearly if they have no wickedness, pretensions or deceit in their mind and heart, and honestly worship me with utmost faith, are truly dedicated to me, and have an unflinching and single-minded devotion for me¹. (Doha no. 87 Ka).

[¹The importance of Bhakti has been highlighted to the citizens of Ayodhya by Lord Ram himself in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 45. In Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precedes Doha no. 46, the Lord reiterates that a true devotee is one who relies exclusively upon Lord Ram for all his needs, whether they pertain to his worldly needs or to his spiritual needs.]

सो०. सत्य कहउँ खग तोहि सुचि सेवक मम प्रानप्रिय ।
अस बिचारि भजु मोहि परिहरि आस भरोस सब ॥ ८७ (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

satya kaha'um' khaga tōhi suci sēvaka mama prānapriya.
asa bicāri bhaju mōhi parihari āsa bharōsa saba. 87 (b).

Oh Bird (khaga)! I tell you truly and in all sincerity that a devoted servant (i.e. a follower or devotee) who is honest and pure in heart and mind is very dear to me; I love him like one loves one's own life.

Hence, keeping this in mind you should abandon all other hopes and reliances upon anyone else or any other means for your welfare, and instead always worship me, revere me, and have unwavering devotion for and faith in me¹ (bhaju mōhi).

[Remember: If you are honest and truthful in your faith and devotion for me, if you sincerely love me and have affection for me without pretensions, then be sure I will go out of my way and a step further than you to reciprocate your emotions and sentiments. I will take full care of your well-being and welfare in all its respects, both from the temporal point of view as well as from the spiritual angle. I will be responsible for you; I will take care of you like a parent takes care of his or her innocent child.] (Sortha no. 87-b)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 46 where Lord Ram has told a similar thing to the citizens of Ayodhya.]

चौ०. कबहूँ काल न व्यापिहि तोही । सुमिरेसु भजेसु निरंतर मोही ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

kabahūṁ kāla na byāpihi tōhī. sumirēsu bhajāesu nirantara mōhī. 1.

[Lord Ram reiterated once again—] You will always remain immune to the effects of Kaal (time)¹. [To wit, you will have an eternal life; you will become immortal. But however, there is a caveat here. What is it?]

Always remember me (Lord Ram), worship me, and have faith in and devotion for me (sumirēsu bhajāesu nirantara mōhī).² (1)

I was so overwhelmed with joy and bliss that I never felt contented or satiated by hearing the Lord's nectar-like sweet words that filled me with ecstasy so much so that my body was extremely thrilled and hairs on it stood on their ends. (2)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 114 where sage Lomus has blessed Kaagbhusund in a similar manner.

²In this context, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 57; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 94; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 96; (iv) Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 109; and (v) Doha no. 113-a.

Lord Ram blessed Kaagbhusund that the factor of 'time' will have no effect on him. From the physical perspective of existence in this gross world it would mean that he will never become old or his mental faculties would not be subjected to the ravages of time like other ordinary living beings; he would remain mentally agile and intelligent forever. To wit, Lord Ram blessed the crow-saint with eternity and imperishability.

But the Lord laid down a condition. What was it? Kaagbhusund is required to focus his mind and heart on Lord Ram by remembering him at all moments of his life; he is to revere the Lord, to worship him, to have deep devotion for him, and to have an unwavering faith in the Lord without fail. This would mean that the crow-sage was to renounce his attachment with and attraction for everything pertaining to the gross physical world and its sense objects; he was to exercise exemplary self-control over

his sense organs, and always remain in a state of meditation where his attention is focussed on Lord Ram.

Now, the next question is: if Kaagbhusund follows the instructions of Lord Ram, how would he become immortal and attain eternity in actual sense; what does this imply? The answer is to be found in metaphysical philosophy. It means that when Kaagbhusund focuses his attention on Lord Ram and remembers the Lord always, he would be living in a perpetual state of meditation where his awareness of existence would rise above the gross world and abide in a transcendental plane, where he would identify himself with the pure super consciousness instead of the gross body. In other words, he would live in a state of Samadhi or a state of transcendental existence which is attained in higher stages of Yoga or meditation. In metaphysics, it is called the 'Turiyateet State'.

Very briefly, the 'consciousness' exists in different levels or planes as follows: (i) The Jagrat State or the 'waking state' where it relates to the gross body and the physical world; the (ii) The Swapna State or the 'dreaming state' where it withdraws from the gross body and the world but still has feelings and emotions albeit at a subtler level; (iii) The Sushupta State or the 'post-dreaming state' where it goes beyond the world of dreams and feels nothing; this state gives true rest and bliss to the Atma as there is no disturbance. From this stage, the consciousness can either revert back to the former two stages or rise higher to the next state which is called (iv) The Turiya State or the 'transcendental state of existence of the Atma when it crosses the threshold of gross existence by remaining perpetually in a state of bliss. When this state becomes established firmly, it is said to be the (v) 'Turiyateet State'—the state of pure consciousness which is virtually irreversible. When a person reaches this eclectic state of bliss, felicity and beatitude, he may appear to be awake in the physical world in the ordinary sense of the word, but actually his mind is focussed somewhere else; it is perpetually submerged in the nectar of bliss that comes with realisation of the Atma or the pure Consciousness. He will not be aware of his physical body, of its pains or comforts. Even if his body is subjected to sufferings, he will not feel it as he is not even aware of the body's existence. This state is equivalent to being in a state of trance known as Samadhi.

We have already read that Lord Ram is a personified form of Brahm, i.e. he is a personified form of Super Cosmic Consciousness—refer Doha no. 85-a. This Consciousness is also known as the Atma or the Soul as it is the essence of life in this creation; nothing that has no Atma has any relevance as far as a living world is concerned, for that which has no Atma in it is as good as dead. Remembering Lord Ram constantly means being focussed on the Atma which is pure consciousness as well as one's 'true self', one's 'true identity'. The gross body of a creature is not his true self or identity at all. This realisation would make Kaagbhusund detached from his gross physical body.

So, Kaagbhusund is expected to become self-realised and enlightened by remaining focussed on his Atma by way of constantly remembering Lord Ram, who is the cosmic Atma. He would experience the cosmic Atma in the form of Lord Ram as being present in his own innerself as his individual Atma.

Now, since the Atma or the pure consciousness is an eternal, infinite and imperishable entity as opposed to the gross physical body of a creature that is mortal and subject to decay and death, once Kaagbhusund begins to identify himself with the Atma instead of the gross body, he too would become eternal and infinite like the Atma itself.

By the blessing and grace of Lord Ram, Kaagbhusund would attain the perpetual state of transcendental existence known as Samadhi wherein he would live like an ordinary creature in this world, going about the affairs his daily routine life in this gross world at the physical level, but remaining indifferent to it at the mental and emotional level as his mind and its attention would entirely be focussed elsewhere—i.e. his attention would be focussed on his Atma and away from the gross world even though he would be going about the daily grind of life in an ordinary way. This in turn would make him live in a perpetual state of bliss and beatitude inspite of being surrounded by the humdrum affairs of life.

Apart from this, when the time comes for him to discard his physical body that is governed by the laws of Nature, i.e. it is mortal, it becomes old and would have to die one day, he would still remain blissful in the realisation that his ‘true self’ is not his body but is his Atma which is eternal, infinite and imperishable.

In practical terms what Lord Ram says would mean that while alive Kaagbhusund will live a pious and spiritual life spent in singing the glories of the Lord and remaining submerged in the divine thoughts of the Lord that would bestow upon him extreme blissfulness and happiness, as he would be unconcerned about his gross mortal body but be focussed on his pure and eternal ‘self’ in the form of his Atma that in turn represents Lord Ram. This would mean that the Lord dwells inside Kaagbhusund’s inner-self and nowhere outside, bringing the Lord so close to the saintly Crow that no distinction would exist between the two of them!

This eclectic knowledge would make Kaagbhusund ecstatic with spiritual joy in a permanent way, and he would realise that this joy is so profound and astounding that all the comforts and pleasures of the material world and its sense objects taken together are no match for it by any measure.

Thus, since he would be self-realised and enlightened, he would have tasted the sense of blessedness, the feeling of ecstasy and beatitude that comes with the realisation that the Supreme Lord resides in one’s own inner-self as the Atma. So when the time comes, he would cheerfully abandon his present gross physical body when it becomes old and worn out, as is its wont according to the law of Nature, because he would have realised that the body does not belong to him. He would know that his Atma is his ‘real self’, and it is eternal and infinite unlike the body.

Therefore, Kaagbhusund’s ‘real self’ in the form of his Atma would abandon the present gross body and assume another physical body, and this process of creation and destruction would go on and on without really causing any mental or emotional distraction or disturbance to him.

This in essence is what Lord Ram means when he advises Kaagbhusund that if he remains steady in his devotion for the Lord, ‘time’ would not affect him, that he would be immune to its effects.]

(6.7) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 89 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it:

In these verses it is stated that true happiness and bliss cannot be had by a person without having Bhakti for the Lord God even though Gyan (gnosis; spiritual knowledge) and Vairagya (renunciation) too are important components in one’s spiritual endeavour. Sage Kaagbhusund says that it is his personal experience that that without knowledge one would not have sufficient level of faith and conviction for the Lord (or it would be difficult to sustain them even if one manages to develop these

virtues inside him for some time). And without having faith, it is difficult to have affection for the Lord. Without faith and affection, it is impossible to have steady Bhakti or devotion for the Lord. It is like the case of lubricity caused by water for it is only a temporary thing, because as soon as the water dries up the lubricity too vanishes.

निज अनुभव अब कहउँ खगेसा । बिनु हरि भजन न जाहिं कलेसा ॥ ५ ॥
राम कृपा बिनु सुनु खगराई । जानि न जाइ राम प्रभुताई ॥ ६ ॥

nija anubhava aba kaha'um̃ khagēsā. binu hari bhajana na jāhiṁ kalēsā. 5.
rāma kṛpā binu sunu khagarāī. jāni na jāi rāma prabhutāī. 6.

Oh King of Birds (khagēsā)! I will now tell you what I have deduced based on my personal experiences, what I have finally realised—and it is that none of the miseries, torments, griefs and pains associated with life can ever be eliminated or overcome without doing ‘Bhajan’ of Lord Hari (Sri Ram). [To wit, without worshipping the Lord and adoring him, without having devotion for him and surrendering before him, without revering the Lord and paying one’s obeisance to him, it is futile to expect freedom from miseries, torments and troubles of life.]¹ (5)

Oh King of Birds (khagarāī)! And the second thing that I have realised is this: That without the grace of Lord Ram it is not possible to understand or fathom the immensity and profundity of Lord Ram’s glories, majesty and greatness, about the Lord’s divinity and holiness. (6)

[¹In the verses that follow, Kaagbhusund has laid down some cardinal principles of life. They are worth noting by a sincere seeker as they would guide him along and show him the way in life.]

जानें बिनु न होइ परतीती । बिनु परतीति होइ नहिं प्रीती ॥ ७ ॥
प्रीति बिना नहिं भगति दिढ़ाई । जिमि खगपति जल कै चिकनाई ॥ ८ ॥

jānēm binu na hō'i paratīti. binu paratīti hō'i nahim prīti. 7.
prīti binā nahim bhagati dirhāī. jimi khagapati jala kai cikanāī. 8.

Without this knowledge and realisation, one would not have sufficient level of faith and conviction for the Lord (or it would be difficult to sustain them even if one manages to develop these virtues inside him for some time). And without having faith, it is difficult to have affection for the Lord. (7)

Without faith and affection, it is impossible to have steady Bhakti or devotion for the Lord. Oh King of Birds (khagapati)! It is like the case of lubricity caused by water for it is only a temporary thing, because as soon as the water dries up the lubricity too vanishes¹. (8)

[¹To wit, if one does not know who Lord Ram really is, if he does not realise that he is the Supreme Being in a personified form, then he would be soon overcome by

confusions and doubts as was the case with Garud. As a result, he would not be able to develop deep faith for the Lord, and in the absence of this he would not be able to have firm devotion for the Lord either.]

सो०. बिनु गुर होइ कि ग्यान ग्यान कि होइ बिराग बिनु।
गावहिं बेद पुरान सुख कि लहिअ हरि भगति बिनु॥ ८९ (क)॥

sōraṭhā.

binu gura hō'i ki gyāna gyāna ki hō'i birāga binu.
gāvahim bēda purāna sukha ki lahi'a hari bhagati binu. 89 (a).

Is it possible to have Gyan (true knowledge about spiritual subjects; true spiritual wisdom) without the help of a Guru (preceptor)¹?

Can anyone have Gyan without inculcating the virtue of Vairagya (renunciation, detachment and dispassion from irrelevant things or subjects that have no bearing to his objective).

Or, as the primary scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans 'sing' or assert and declare in an unequivocal language, can anyone ever have true happiness and bliss (in life) without having Bhakti (or devotion) for Lord Hari (the Lord God, i.e. Lord Ram in the present context)³? (Sortha no. 89-a)

[¹A wise and learned preceptor would explain the intricacies pertaining to spiritual matters to a seeker in the same way a school teacher teaches a diligent student in his class. But what would a teacher or the preceptor do if the student or the seeker is not sincere to learn? And when he fails to attain the desired goal or knowledge, he goes out and blames his teacher or school or the preceptor for his own follies, his own failures and shortcomings.

²If a school student constantly getting distracted by myriad of things, he would not be able to concentrate on his studies, and this would naturally result in failure. Why should he then blame his school or teacher? Similarly, if one chooses to walk on the path leading to the Lord God, he must keep himself focussed by turning his mind away from all worldly attractions and temptations. Otherwise he would be worse off, being neither here nor there. Pretensions won't help as they would be like cheating one's own self.

³This statement highlights the main reward of having Bhakti—it is that the practitioner gets to have happiness and bliss in his life. After all, every endeavour a person makes has the objective of getting joy, happiness, comfort and peace, and if this is not achieved all efforts are wasted. Bhakti frees the creature from spiritual worries as now he is certain that the Lord God is over his head to take care of him, both in this life and in the life hereafter. Freedom from all sorts of worries in itself is a great bestower of joy, happiness, bliss and mental peace.]

कोउ बिश्राम कि पाव तात सहज संतोष बिनु।
चलै कि जल बिनु नाव कोटि जतन पचि पचि मरिअ॥ ८९ (ख)॥

kō'u biśrāma ki pāva tāta sahaja santōṣa binu.
calai ki jala binu nāva kōṭi jatana paci paci mari'a. 89 (b).

Dear (tāta), can anyone ever find rest, peace and tranquillity without having a natural sense of contentedness with whatever one has.

Can a boat float without water under it even if one dies making countless efforts to move it, and strains every nerve of his body till his last breath trying to row the boat?

[To wit, just as it is impossible to row the boat and make it move ahead if it is not floating on water, it is also impossible to find peace and tranquillity if one does not feel contented in one's heart and mind with whatever one has. This is because desires, wants, longings and yearnings have no end, and unless one is satisfied with himself and has renounced desires and longings, he will never be at rest for his entire life would be spent in fulfilling them. If he manages to fulfil one desire, other desires rear their heads one after another, and the vicious cycle continues unabated.] (Sortha no. 89-b)

(6.8) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 90:

It is stated in these verses that one cannot have peace if one harbours such negative and spiritually degrading quality as Kaam (lust, passion) inside him, and that Kaam cannot be overcome without the help of Bhakti. To wit, Bhakti is an effective antidote to this negative quality in a living being:

चौ०. बिनु संतोष न काम नसाहीं । काम अछत सुख सपनेहुँ नाहीं ॥ १ ॥
राम भजन बिनु मिटहिं कि कामा । थल बिहीन तरु कबहुँ कि जामा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

binu santōṣa na kāmā nasāhīm. kāmā achata sukha sapanēhum' nāhīm. 1.
rāma bhajana binu miṭahīm ki kāmā. thala bihīna taru kabahum' ki jāmā. 2.

Without having contentedness (known as “santōṣa”) one's desires, wants and longings (known as “kāmā”) never cease, and as long as they are present one can never find happiness and peace even in one's dream. (1)

Can desires, wants and longings ever be eliminated without worshipping, adoring and having devotion for Lord Ram (compositely known as “bhajana”)? Say, can a tree ever take root without soil (or earth)?

[To wit, just as it is not possible to expect a tree to grow without soil and earth to give its roots a solid foundation, it is also not possible to overcome Kaam without having contentedness on the one hand, and without worshipping and having devotion for Lord Ram on the other hand.] (2)

(6.9) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 95:

All the various spiritual practices that a person undertakes are no comparison to practicing Bhakti, because ultimate spiritual bliss and peace as well as attainment of emancipation and salvation for the creature's soul when it merges with the Supreme Soul is not possible without having Bhakti:

जप तप मख सम दम ब्रत दाना । बिरति बिबेक जोग बिग्याना ॥ ५ ॥

सब कर फल रघुपति पद प्रेमा । तेहि बिनु कोउ न पावइ छेमा ॥ ६ ॥

japa tapa makha sama dama brata dānā. birati bibēka jōga bigyānā. 5.
saba kara phala raghupati pada prēmā. tēhi binu kō'u na pāva'i chēmā. 6.

Doing various and myriads of meritorious deeds and practicing so many religious exercises such as Japa (repetition of holy Mantras which are esoteric spiritual formulas, or muttering of prayers), Tapa (penance; austerity), Yagya (fire sacrifices), Sama and Dama (practicing equanimity and self-control of the mind and the sense organs), Vrat (observing strict sacred vows and religious restrictions), Daan (making charity; donation; giving of alms), Virati or Vairagya (renunciation; detachment; dispassion), Vivek (wisdom, right thinking and judgement, discrimination), Yoga (meditation, reflection and contemplation), Vigyan (spiritual wisdom and enlightenment), and all other such practices and observances --- (5),

--- The only worthwhile eclectic reward, the only worthwhile spiritual merit and the only worthwhile mystical benefit that accrue to a person by doing countless auspicious deeds and undertaking various religious or spiritual exercises as enumerated above, is only one—and it is have affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram. [To wit, if a person fails to develop affection, devotion and faith in the holy feet of Lord Ram then all the exercises listed herein above go to waste.]

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, one cannot have any worthwhile merit nor attain any gain by way of liberation and deliverance without having faith, devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram. (6)

(6.10) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 112 (b):

उमा जे राम चरन रत बिगत काम मद क्रोध ।

निज प्रभुमय देखहि जगत केहि सन करहि बिरोध ॥ ११२ (ख) ॥

umā jē rāma carana rata bigata kāma mada krōdha.
nija prabhumaya dēkhahim jagata kēhi sana karahim birōdha. 112 (b).

[Lord Shiva, who has been narrating this story of the conversation between the crow-saint Kaagbhusund and Garud to his consort Uma, said to her by way of explaining why Kaagbhusund did not feel angry at sage Lomus for cursing him just because he wanted the sage to enlighten him about the process of worshipping the Saguna form of the Supreme Being, something that was not so grave as to invite the punishment of being cursed to become a crow—] “Oh Uma, listen! Those who have affection and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram, those who are free from the taints of Kaam (passions and desires), Mada (ego and pride) and Krodha (anger, wrath, fury)—such

souls see the whole world as a manifestation of their beloved Lord (Sri Ram), they perceive their beloved Lord everywhere and in all forms in this world. This being the case, say why and how can they have ill-will or animosity with anyone? {Therefore, he gets angry at no one, he does not harbour animosity, ill-will or hatred for anyone in this world, he has no passions left in him, he lusts for nothing, and he has no ego and pride in him—because he sees his beloved Lord in all forms in this world, whether they are visible or invisible”.} (Doha no. 112-b)

(6.11) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 115:

चौ०. जे असि भगति जानि परिहरहीं । केवल ग्यान हेतु श्रम करहीं ॥ १ ॥
ते जड़ कामधेनु गृहँ त्यागी । खोजत आकु फिरहिं पय लागी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jē asi bhagati jāni pariharahīm. kēvala gyāna hētu śrama karahīm. 1.
tē jaṛa kāmādhēnu grham̐ tyāgī. khōjata āku phirahīm paya lāgī. 2.

Those who discard or abandon such a glorious path of Bhakti (devotion for the Lord as a means of spiritual fulfilment and attainment of bliss, peace, happiness and deliverance) inspite of knowing its astounding virtues and stupendous authority and powers, and instead make strenuous efforts to pursue the path of Gyan (acquisition of wisdom and knowledge as elucidated in the scriptures such as the Vedas, the Purans etc.) for their spiritual needs [1]—verily indeed and in all sooth, such people are stupids as they leave the Kaamdhenu cow (the all wish-fulfilling cow) that is present in their own homes and go out searching for milk seeping from the stem of the Aak plant (the milk-weed; the swallow-wart plant) [2]. (1-2)

[If one can attain one’s objective by an easy and simple method, there is no sense and wisdom in undergoing hardships and suffering for attaining it by other more complicated and difficult means. Bhakti is a simple method to attain spiritual blessedness so much so that even those who are illiterates can attain joy, happiness, bliss and freedom from the chain of birth and death by following the path of devotion and love for Lord God. Hence, what sense is there in following the difficult and strenuous path of ‘Gyan’ which requires high mental abilities, a lot of effort and observance of so many vows and religious practices entailing diligence and sufferance that it becomes almost impossible to adhere to it faithfully and to achieve success through it.

The superiority of Bhakti over Gyan has been endorsed by Lord Ram himself in Ram Charit Manas. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Doha no. 46.

Kaagbhusund has also elaborated on this principle of Bhakti being better than Gyan in one’s spiritual quest in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 119—to Doha no. 120.]

सुनु खगेस हरि भगति बिहाई । जे सुख चाहिं आन उपाई ॥ ३ ॥
ते सठ महासिंधु बिनु तरनी । पैरि पार चाहिं जड़ करनी ॥ ४ ॥

sunu khagēsa hari bhagati bihā'ī. jē sukha cāhahim āna upā'ī. 3.
tē saṭha mahāsindhu binu taranī. pairi pāra cāhahim jaṛa karanī. 4.

Oh the King of Birds (khagēsa)! Listen. Those who desire to have happiness, peace, solace and succour, those who wish to feel blessed and contented, those who want freedom from worldly miseries and torments, those who are desirous of attaining liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death—if they abandon or discard the path of Bhakti and seek these blessings by following any other means, then they are exceedingly stupid and unfortunate ones. (3)

Such duds wish to cross a huge ocean by swimming across it instead of boarding a ship that is reliable and sturdy.

[To wit, just as it is impossible for a person to cross a huge ocean by swimming across it, so it also impossible for one to cross the world of transmigration without the help of Bhakti for the Lord God inside one's heart. 'Bhakti' here refers to the glorious virtues of devotion, worship, faith, affection, commitment, reverence, submission and selfless service for Lord Ram.] (4)

(4.12) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 116 Ka along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it:

These verses explicitly say that Bhakti is very dear to the Lord God:

माया भगति सुनुहु तुम्ह दोऊ । नारि बर्ग जानइ सब कोऊ ॥ ३ ॥
पुनि रघुबीरहि भगति पिआरी । माया खलु नर्तकी बिचारी ॥ ४ ॥

māyā bhagati sunahu tumha dō'ū. nāri barga jāna'i saba kō'ū. 3.
puni raghubīrahi bhagati pi'ārī. māyā khalu nartakī bicārī. 4.

'Maya' (worldly delusions) and 'Bhakti' (devotion for Lord God) are both of the feminine gender¹. Everyone (i.e. every wise man) is aware of it. (3)

But there is a difference between the two. While 'Bhakti' is very dear to Lord Raghubir (Ram) and the Lord is favourably inclined towards it (because it has auspicious virtues and endeavours to bring the creature nearer to the Lord instead of pushing him away from the him as done by Maya), the poor 'Maya' on the other hand is like a cunning dancing girl or a courtesan who is not looked at with respect even by the king himself (who uses her services as and when he requires them, but he dislikes her internally because he knows that she has no character).² (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 43; (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 70-b.

'Maya' or delusions and 'Bhakti' or devotion, both have been classified as being maids of Lord Ram. But the Lord is favourable towards Bhakti because it

represents noble and virtuous qualities in a creature that uplift his soul, whereas Maya is simply like a dancing girl as it represents worldly taints and evil qualities that are spiritually demeaning for the creature. So if a creature has the virtue of Bhakti for the Lord in him, Maya is sore affright to disturb such a creature because it would offend the Lord as he prefers Bhakti over Maya.

Bhakti and Maya are treated as ‘females or maids’. This is because their ‘Lord’ here is Sri Ram, a manifested human ‘male’ form of the Supreme Being who was also a ‘King’ of Ayodhya. The Upanishads and other Vedic texts call the Supreme Being as the ‘Viraat Purush’, the Cosmic Male. Another word used as a synonym for the Supreme Being is ‘Brahm’, but Brahm represents the very basis of creation, i.e. the Cosmic Consciousness that has no gender. When this Cosmic Consciousness started the process of creation, there evolved, in a step-by-step manner and in an increasingly grosser form, a cosmic Male and a cosmic Female to give shape to and help in self-propagation of the forthcoming creation, and to maintain its self-perpetuating forward movement in the form of a never ending cycle of creation and destruction. The primary form of the Cosmic Male was known as the ‘Viraat Purush’ (“Male”) and the primary form of the Cosmic Female was known as the ‘Shakti’ (the Male’s authority, powers, dynamism and energy to act and do something).

As in all cases where ‘Shakti’ is involved, it can turn out to be either ‘bad’ or ‘good’. If it is ‘good’ then this Shakti is loved by the Lord; if it turns out to be ‘bad’, it is disliked by the Lord. This is what happens in practice with Bhakti and Maya respectively. Whereas the Lord favours Bhakti, he abhors Maya, though both are under his domain and command.

Remember: These are symbolic ways of explaining complicated metaphysical principles which basically mean that if a living being has the good virtue of devotion and faith for the Lord God inside him, the negative traits associated with delusions would not darken his inner-self.

In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 45; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 46.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 71 (b) it is asserted that Maya is like a ‘maid’ servant of Lord Raghubir (Ram). And in Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow this Doha it is asserted that Maya that is so powerful that it makes the whole world dance to its tune is scared of annoying the Lord so much that all its moves are in accordance with the signals given by the movement of Lord Ram’s eyebrows. That is, Maya keeps alert and closely watches how Lord Ram reacts to her maverick tricks. If she gets even a slight hint that any of her moves are disliked by her Lord, she immediately mends her ways.

In the context of Bhakti it is clear that since Lord Ram prefers it over Maya, the latter dares not offend the former because that would indirectly offend her Lord, Sri Ram.

The net effect of this scenario is that if a person has the virtue of ‘Bhakti’ in him then he is assured of freedom from getting tormented by Maya and the rest of her associates which are listed below.

‘Maya’ is a term that incorporates in its meaning a lot many spiritual problems. They are called the ‘family of Maya’ because they are all related to each other and work in tandem. These inalienable components of Maya are formidably powerful so much so that they don’t spare even the creator Brahma as well as Lord

Shiva from their clutches. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 71.

²While having the virtue of Bhakti enables a person to attain spiritual purity and bliss, Maya on the other hand engulfs him in a web of miseries and problems that are associated with this gross and perishable material world of sense objects. So therefore, Lord Ram prefers Bhakti as it helps its adherents to become pious and holy and acquire auspicious spiritual values. Maya pushes the creature into the vortex of worldly desires and injects in him many negative qualities. So Lord Ram dislikes it.

The negative qualities that are natural accompaniments of Maya have been listed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 71. They are called the ‘family members’ of Maya because they all bear the characters of delusion and their resultant problems for the creature (refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 71).

These so-called associates or ‘family members’ of Maya are the following—Moha (attachment, infatuation), Kaam (lust, passion), Trishna (desires, yearning), Krodh (anger), Lobha (greed), Sri Mada (pride of self; pride of honour and achievements, of worldly prosperity and wealth), Gunas (the three inherent qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama Gunas that every living being possesses, and which mould his character and personality), Maana Mada (arrogance and haughtiness that comes with honour, success and respect), Joban Jwar (the recklessness and arrogance of youth), Mamta (affection and attachment to worldly things), Matsarya (envy, jealousy), Shoka (grief), Chinta (worry), Maya (delusions), Manorath (hopes, aspirations, vows, desires, determination to do this and achieve that), and the trio consisting of son/progeny-wealth/prosperity-fame/good name.

The independent and combined effects of all these entities on the creature has been explained alongside each verse in the text.]

भगतिहि सानुकूल रघुराया । ताते तेहि डरपति अति माया ॥ ५ ॥

राम भगति निरुपम निरुपाधी । बसइ जासु उर सदा अबाधी ॥ ६ ॥

bhagatihi sānukūla raghurāyā. tāte tēhi ḍarapati ati māyā. 5.

rāma bhagati nirupama nirupādhi. basa'i jāsū ura sadā abādhi. 6.

Lord Ram is kind and favourably disposed towards ‘Bhakti’ (devotion). This is the reason why ‘Maya’ (delusion creating powers of the Lord) is scared of it (Bhakti)¹.

[Here, Bhakti and Maya have been personified, and regarded as close associates of the Lord. ‘Bhakti’ is the favourite of Lord Ram, so the Lord’s maid known as ‘Maya’ is scared to offend the former. On the other hand, Maya does everything within its reach to please Bhakti in order to indirectly please her Lord, Sri Ram, and be in the Lord’s good books by being docile and obedient.] (5)

The spiritual virtue known as ‘Bhakti for Lord Ram’, or devotion for the Lord, is highly pure and immaculate; it is without any worldly taints or negativity; it is matchless in its purity and effectiveness². [Whereas, on the other hand, ‘Maya’ is a corrupt entity, and so it has no moral strength to face the pure entity known as ‘Bhakti’. While ‘Bhakti’ leads the creature towards the Lord, ‘Maya’ pulls him away from him. While ‘Bhakti’ helps the creature obtain liberation and deliverance as well

as eternal peace and bliss, ‘Maya’ does the opposite: it forces the creature in the quicksand of worldly delusions and its attendant miseries and torments.]

So, ‘Maya’ is afraid to disturb anyone in whose heart the eclectic spiritual virtue of ‘Bhakti’ finds a permanent residence. Maya is hesitant to play its tricks upon a person in whose heart Bhakti resides³. [Maya knows that if it plays smart with the Lord’s devotee who has Bhakti or devotion for Lord Ram in his heart, then it is sure to offend the Lord who shall punish her for her demeanours because, as has been said above, the Lord favours Bhakti for its immaculate and pious nature as well as its endeavour to provide spiritual peace and liberation to the soul of the living being—which Maya does not do.] (6)

[Note—¹It has been said in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 116 herein above that “Maya is like a dancer”. The dancer would adopt the posture that pleases her master, and would synchronise all her dance moves in accordance with the liking of the lord for whom she dances. So obviously, Maya would not invite the wrath of her Lord, Sri Ram, by offending the Lord’s favourite maid known as Bhakti.

²Lord Ram has himself preached on the importance and spiritual value of Bhakti at many places in Ram Charit Manas.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 16 (to Laxman); (ii) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36 (to Sabari); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-10 that precede Doha no. 43 (to Narad); (b) Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 85; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 86; (iii) Doha no. 87-a (to Kaagbhusund); (iv) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45; (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 46 (to the citizens of Ayodhya).

³Goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of knowledge and wisdom, has also endorsed this fact that a person in whose heart Lord Ram’s Bhakti resides, Maya has no effect on him. That is, it is not possible to delude a sincere devotee of the Lord as the Lord protects him from all negative influences that may harm his peace of mind and undermine his spiritual future. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 295.]

तेहि बिलोकि माया सकुचाई । करि न सकइ कछु निज प्रभुताई ॥ ७ ॥
अस बिचारि जे मुनि बिग्यानी । जाचहिं भगति सकल सुख खानी ॥ ८ ॥

tēhi bilōki māyā sakucā’ī. kari na saka’i kachu nija prabhutā’ī. 7.
asa bicāri jē muni bigyānī. jācahiṁ bhagati sakala sukha khānī. 8.

Maya is hesitant and reluctant to offend Bhakti and those who have this virtue in themselves; it is unable to play its dirty tricks and impose its will on those persons who have Bhakti in their hearts. (7)

Taking this fact into consideration, wise sages who are learned and intelligent have deduced that ‘Bhakti’ is a mine of all happiness and peace. (8)

[Note—Kaagbhusund emphasises in this foregoing discourse that out of all the paths and ways that are open to a spiritual aspirant, the best and the easiest is that of ‘Bhakti’ or having devotion for Lord God and total submission to the Lord. This ensures that ‘Maya’ and its powerful companions (Moha, Kaam, Trishna, Krodh, Lobha, Mada, Maan, Mamta, Matsarya, Chinta, Shoka, Manorath etc. as listed in Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 71) do not torment the aspirant.

Besides these components of Maya, there are others, collectively herded in one group called ‘Avidya’ or ignorance. This Avidya is like a knot around the heart and the mind of the spiritual aspirant. Its characters, salient features and how it affects the creature has been discussed below, from Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 116—to Doha no. 119.]

दो०. यह रहस्य रघुनाथ कर बेगि न जानइ कोइ ।
जो जानइ रघुपति कृपाँ सपनेहुँ मोह न होइ ॥ ११६ (क) ॥

dōhā.

yaha rahasya raghunātha kara bēgi na jāna'i kō'i.
jō jāna'i raghupati kṛpām̐ sapanēhum̐ mōha na hō'i. 116 (a).

This topic concerning Maya and Bhakti (as discussed in the foregoing verses) is very esoteric, and it is a secret related to Lord Raghunath (Sri Ram) that no one can know easily. Whoever knows it, it is due to the grace of Lord Raghupati on him. And once it happens (i.e. once one knows the secret relationship between Maya and Bhakti, and how easily Maya can be controlled by the medium of Bhakti for the Lord), he cannot have delusions even in his dream¹. [Why? Because he would have developed Bhakti for the Lord in his heart, and therefore would not be affected by Maya or worldly delusions.] [Doha no. 116 (a).]

[Note—¹‘Not having delusions even in one’s dream’ is a figure of speech that simply means he will never have delusions ever, under any circumstance. This is because when a wise person inculcates the auspicious virtue of Bhakti (devotion) in his heart, he is blessed by all the goodness that are natural accompaniments of Bhakti, and one such bonus benefit is that Maya (worldly delusions) do not affect him. The other natural benefit is that he becomes a recipient of the Lord’s grace.]

(6.12) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 119:

It is said here that: “The Vedas, the Tantras and the wise sages have declared that the supreme state of transcendental existence is very difficult to obtain. But by worshipping Lord Ram, the same state of supreme bliss, beatitude and felicity comes without even asking for it.”

चौ०. ग्यान पंथ कृपान कै धारा । परत खगेस होइ नहिं बारा ॥ १ ॥

जो निर्बिघ्न पंथ निर्बहई । सो कैवल्य परम पद लहई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

gyāna pantha krpāna kai dhārā. parata khagēsa hō'i nahim bārā. 1.
jō nirbighna pantha nirbahaī. sō kaivalya parama pada lahaī. 2.

Oh the King of Birds (khagēsa—i.e. Garud)! The path of Gyan (wisdom and knowledge) is like a double-edged sword. It is a very difficult path, and it does not take long for a spiritual aspirant to fall (or slip and commit errors) and get injured (or harmed) in this path. (1)

Only those who can endure the immense difficulties and great hurdles that are natural in this path, and can follow it successfully to the destination it leads, become eligible to attain the spiritually exalted stature of 'Kaivalya', the spiritual state of existence that is one of its only kind, is the most exalted and the best, and which entails attainment of oneness between the Atma of the creature and the Parmatma or the Supreme Being who represents the cosmic Consciousness¹. (2)

[¹It is known as 'Moksha'—the final emancipation and salvation of the soul. It is the ultimate destination for the soul when the cycle of birth and death stops for it. In this state, the individual's consciousness merges and becomes one with and indistinguishable from the cosmic Consciousness.

To wit, the path of acquisition of true spiritual knowledge that leads to self-realisation, wisdom and enlightenment is a very difficult path and requires a lot of strenuous effort to travel. The chances of falling on the wayside are strong, and the rate of success is very low. The incumbent dangers of this path are like a two-edged sword because a slight carelessness leads to horrifying consequences for the spiritual aspirant. Even a small error on the part of the spiritual aspirant can upset all the efforts that has made for long in order to attain his objectives. The risks are too many and chances of failure are too high to be neglected.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 45.

However, there is a simpler way for the aspirant to attain his spiritual objectives. This way is outlined herein below in next set of verses.]

अति दुर्लभ कैवल्य परम पद । संत पुरान निगम आगम बढ ॥ ३ ॥

राम भजत सोइ मुकुति गोसाई । अनइच्छित आवइ बरिआई ॥ ४ ॥

ati durlabha kaivalya parama pada. santa purāna nigama āgama bada. 3.
rāma bhajata sō'i mukuti gōsā'īm. ana'icchita āva'i bari'ā'īm. 4.

But attainment of the supreme state of existence known as the 'Kaivalya Param Pada' is not an easy spiritual goal to achieve; it is extremely difficult and rare for one to successfully achieve this state of existence. This is what great saints, the Purans, the Vedas and the Tantras (i.e. the primary scriptures) say. (3)

Oh Lord ("gōsā'īm"—i.e. Garud)! That same rarest-of-rare and most difficult state of existence which is equivalent to the final liberation and deliverance of the

creature from the cycle of birth and death, which also means emancipation and salvation of the creature's soul (sō'i mukuti), is easily attained without any especial effort or undertaking strenuous exercises by simply worshipping Lord Ram, and having devotion and affection for the Lord. (4)

[¹ “The great saints and sages (those who are wise and experienced in this matter), the Purans and the Vedas (the primary scriptures), as well as the rest of the scriptures (the secondary scriptures) affirm unanimously that the attainment of the exalted spiritual stature of ‘Kaivalya’ is extremely difficult and riddled with difficulties. But the same ‘Mukti’ (beatitude, the final emancipation and salvation of the soul that is known as Kaivalya) is attainable automatically, without facing any difficulties or making any special efforts to acquire it due to the grace of Lord Ram which comes when one sincerely worships the Lord and has developed profound devotion and deep affection for him. Put simply it means that the best kind of spiritual state of existence marked by the highest form of beatitude and bliss, and the best spiritual goal of the soul to obtain its emancipation and salvation are obtained when one adopts the path of ‘Bhakti’ instead of pursuing the path of ‘Gyan’. It is true that Gyan is very powerful and potent, but it is like a male who can be seduced by a cunning woman. On the contrary, Bhakti is like a soft-hearted and kind woman who cannot be seduced by another woman no matter how cunning she might be!”]

The term ‘Kaivalya Pada’ literally means the ‘only one state of existence when there is non-duality between any two entities’. It is a unique non-dual state of existence when the individual Jiva, the living being, obtains oneness with the Supreme Being; it is the ultimate state of supreme blessedness, beatitude and felicity; it is the attainment of emancipation and salvation; it is the final liberation and deliverance of the soul.

It envisions the merger of the ‘self’, the individual creature's Atma or soul, with the supreme ‘Self’ or the Supreme Soul known as the Supreme Brahm or the Supreme Being. This means that all distinctions between the individual creature and the supreme Brahm are erased, and they become one. This translates into freeing the creature from taking birth again and again. Refer: Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 108-109 of Krishna Yajur Veda.

In this context, refer also to Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 36; (b) Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 52; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 57; (iii) Doha no. 78—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 79.

How attainment of the supreme state of blessedness, blissfulness and beatitude is not possible without having devotion for Lord Ram has been explained in the verses that follow herein below.]

जिमि थल बिनु जल रहि न सकाई । कोटि भाँति कोउ करै उपाई ॥ ५ ॥

तथा मोच्छ सुख सुनु खगराई । रहि न सकइ हरि भगति बिहाई ॥ ६ ॥

jimi thala binu jala rahi na sakā'ī. kōṭi bhāmṭi kō'u karai upā'ī. 5.

tathā mōccha sukha sunu khagarā'ī. rahi na saka'i hari bhagati bihā'ī. 6.

Oh the King of Birds (khagarā'ī)! Listen. Even as it is not possible to keep or hold liquid water dangling in mid air in space, for water needs the support of solid ground

to stay at a particular point or level, so it is also impossible to sustain the feeling of supreme bliss, blessedness and beatitude that is attained when one accesses the Kaivalya Pada (oneness of the ‘self’ with the ‘supreme Self’; oneness of the Atma with the Parmatma) without having devotion and affection (Bhakti) for Lord Ram, no matter how hard one tries to do so, or how many countless devices he devises to do it.¹ (5-6)

[¹To wit, just as it is impossible that water can stay anywhere if there is no solid ground to support it no matter how hard a person tries to do so, because a liquid needs a hard surface for support, the beatitude and bliss experienced when the creature attains the highest state of oneness with the Supreme Being is not sustainable without the ground support of devotion for the same Supreme Being in his form known as Lord Ram.

It is impossible for water to stay hanging or dangling in mid air; it will stay at a particular point or level only if there is solid ground below it. Likewise, the state of supreme blissfulness, the exalted state of blessedness, felicity and beatitude is sustainable only if the living being has devotion and affection for Lord Ram. Otherwise it would be a transient affair with a temporary sense of spiritual joy that would dissipate sooner or later.]

अस बिचारि हरि भगत सयाने । मुक्ति निरादर भगति लुभाने ॥ ७ ॥
भगति करत बिनु जतन प्रयासा । संसृति मूल अबिद्या नासा ॥ ८ ॥

asa bicāri hari bhagata sayānē. mukti nirādara bhagati lubhānē. 7.
bhagati karata binu jatana prayāsā. sansṛti mūla abidyā nāsā. 8.

Realising the stupendous spiritual value of Bhakti vis-à-vis Mukti (i.e. blissfulness and blessedness attained by having devotion for Lord God or Lord Ram, as compared to attaining the same state of blissfulness and blessedness by other means such as acquisition of knowledge and wisdom leading to self-realisation, or doing sacrifices, penances, austerities, meditation, reflection, contemplation etc.), those who are really clever, sagacious, erudite, intelligent and wise (*sayānē*) prefer Bhakti and become an ardent devotees of Lord Hari instead of opting for Mukti which they prefer to spurn and cast aside¹. (7)

By following the path of Bhakti one is easily able to destroy or eliminate the root cause of all spiritual problems arising out of delusions and ignorance of the Truth (*abidyā*) that leads the creature to fall in the cycle of birth and death with its endless chain of miseries, pain, grief and torments². (8)

[¹To wit, those who have understood the importance of Bhakti for Lord God as a means to attain their spiritual goal, they would shun all other means to achieve it.

Lord Ram has himself emphasised the supremacy of Bhakti over Gyan in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 45.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 118 which also refers to the presence of ‘avidya’ or spiritual ignorance that traps the in the vortex of sufferings and miseries.]

(6.13) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai 1 that precedes Doha 119—to Doha 120:

In these verses it is stated that though ‘Gyan’ (gnosis; truthful knowledge of the soul and how to obtain liberation and deliverance) is a powerful tool, it cannot be compared with ‘Bhakti’ (devotion and love for the Lord God). The straightforward reason is that Bhakti is simple and uncomplicated to practice while Gyan is an arduous journey full of pitfalls and dangers of failure:

चौ०. ग्यान पंथ कृपान कै धारा । परत खगेस होइ नहिं बारा ॥ १ ॥
जो निर्बिघ्न पंथ निर्बहई । सो कैवल्य परम पद लहई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

gyāna pantha kṛpāna kai dhārā. parata khagēsa hō'i nahim bārā. 1.
jō nirbighna pantha nirbaha'ī. sō kaivalya parama pada laha'ī. 2.

Oh the King of Birds (khagēsa—i.e. Garud)! The path of Gyan (wisdom and knowledge) is like a double-edged sword. It is a very difficult path, and it does not take long for a spiritual aspirant to fall (or slip and commit errors) and get injured (or harmed) in this path. (1)

Only those who can endure the immense difficulties and great hurdles that are natural in this path, and can follow it successfully to the destination it leads, become eligible to attain the spiritually exalted stature of ‘Kaivalya’, the spiritual state of existence that is one of its only kind, is the most exalted and the best, and which entails attainment of oneness between the Atma of the creature and the Parmatma or the Supreme Being who represents the cosmic Consciousness¹. (2)

[¹It is known as ‘Moksha’—the final emancipation and salvation of the soul. It is the ultimate destination for the soul when the cycle of birth and death stops for it. In this state, the individual’s consciousness merges and becomes one with and indistinguishable from the cosmic Consciousness.

To wit, the path of acquisition of true spiritual knowledge that leads to self-realisation, wisdom and enlightenment is a very difficult path and requires a lot of strenuous effort to travel. The chances of falling on the wayside are strong, and the rate of success is very low. The incumbent dangers of this path are like a two-edged sword because a slight carelessness leads to horrifying consequences for the spiritual aspirant. Even a small error on the part of the spiritual aspirant can upset all the efforts that has made for long in order to attain his objectives. The risks are too many and chances of failure are too high to be neglected.

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However, there is a simpler way for the aspirant to attain his spiritual objectives. This way is outlined herein below in next set of verses.]

अति दुर्लभ कैवल्य परम पद । संत पुरान निगम आगम बद ॥ ३ ॥

राम भजत सोइ मुकुति गोसाईं । अनइच्छित आवइ बरिआई ॥ ४ ॥

ati durlabha kaivalya parama pada. santa purāna nigama āgama bada. 3.
rāma bhajata sō'i mukuti gōsā'īm. ana'icchita āva'i bari'ā'īm. 4.

But attainment of the supreme state of existence known as the 'Kaivalya Param Pada' is not an easy spiritual goal to achieve; it is extremely difficult and rare for one to successfully achieve this state of existence. This is what great saints, the Purans, the Vedas and the Tantras (i.e. the primary scriptures) say. (3)

Oh Lord ("gōsā'īm"—i.e. Garud)! That same rarest-of-rare and most difficult state of existence which is equivalent to the final liberation and deliverance of the creature from the cycle of birth and death, which also means emancipation and salvation of the creature's soul (sō'i mukuti), is easily attained without any especial effort or undertaking strenuous exercises by simply worshipping Lord Ram, and having devotion and affection for the Lord. (4)

[¹ "The great saints and sages (those who are wise and experienced in this matter), the Purans and the Vedas (the primary scriptures), as well as the rest of the scriptures (the secondary scriptures) affirm unanimously that the attainment of the exalted spiritual stature of 'Kaivalya' is extremely difficult and riddled with difficulties. But the same 'Mukti' (beatitude, the final emancipation and salvation of the soul that is known as Kaivalya) is attainable automatically, without facing any difficulties or making any special efforts to acquire it due to the grace of Lord Ram which comes when one sincerely worships the Lord and has developed profound devotion and deep affection for him. Put simply it means that the best kind of spiritual state of existence marked by the highest form of beatitude and bliss, and the best spiritual goal of the soul to obtain its emancipation and salvation are obtained when one adopts the path of 'Bhakti' instead of pursuing the path of 'Gyan'. It is true that Gyan is very powerful and potent, but it is like a male who can be seduced by a cunning woman. On the contrary, Bhakti is like a soft-hearted and kind woman who cannot be seduced by another woman no matter how cunning she might be!"]

The term 'Kaivalya Pada' literally means the 'only one state of existence when there is non-duality between any two entities'. It is a unique non-dual state of existence when the individual Jiva, the living being, obtains oneness with the Supreme Being; it is the ultimate state of supreme blessedness, beatitude and felicity; it is the attainment of emancipation and salvation; it is the final liberation and deliverance of the soul.

It envisions the merger of the 'self', the individual creature's Atma or soul, with the supreme 'Self' or the Supreme Soul known as the Supreme Brahm or the Supreme Being. This means that all distinctions between the individual creature and the supreme Brahm are erased, and they become one. This translates into freeing the creature from taking birth again and again. Refer: Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 108-109 of Krishna Yajur Veda.

In this context, refer also to Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 36; (b) Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 52; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 57; (iii) Doha no. 78—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 79.

How attainment of the supreme state of blessedness, blissfulness and beatitude is not possible without having devotion for Lord Ram has been explained in the verses that follow herein below.]

जिमि थल बिनु जल रहि न सकाई । कोटि भाँति कोउ करै उपाई ॥ ५ ॥
तथा मोच्छ सुख सुनु खगराई । रहि न सकइ हरि भगति बिहाई ॥ ६ ॥

jimi thala binu jala rahi na sakā'ī. kōṭi bhāmṭi kō'u karai upā'ī. 5.
tathā mōccha sukha sunu khagarā'ī. rahi na saka'i hari bhagati bihā'ī. 6.

Oh the King of Birds (khagarā'ī)! Listen. Even as it is not possible to keep or hold liquid water dangling in mid air in space, for water needs the support of solid ground to stay at a particular point or level, so it is also impossible to sustain the feeling of supreme bliss, blessedness and beatitude that is attained when one accesses the Kaivalya Pada (oneness of the 'self' with the 'supreme Self'; oneness of the Atma with the Parmatma) without having devotion and affection (Bhakti) for Lord Ram, no matter how hard one tries to do so, or how many countless devices he devises to do it.¹ (5-6)

[¹To wit, just as it is impossible that water can stay anywhere if there is no solid ground to support it no matter how hard a person tries to do so, because a liquid needs a hard surface for support, the beatitude and bliss experienced when the creature attains the highest state of oneness with the Supreme Being is not sustainable without the ground support of devotion for the same Supreme Being in his form known as Lord Ram.

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अस बिचारि हरि भगत सयाने । मुक्ति निरादर भगति लुभाने ॥ ७ ॥
भगति करत बिनु जतन प्रयासा । संसृति मूल अबिद्या नासा ॥ ८ ॥

asa bicāri hari bhagata sayānē. mukti nirādara bhagati lubhānē. 7.
bhagati karata binu jatana prayāsā. sansṛti mūla abidyā nāsā. 8.

Realising the stupendous spiritual value of Bhakti vis-à-vis Mukti (i.e. blissfulness and blessedness attained by having devotion for Lord God or Lord Ram, as compared to attaining the same state of blissfulness and blessedness by other means such as acquisition of knowledge and wisdom leading to self-realisation, or doing sacrifices, penances, austerities, meditation, reflection, contemplation etc.), those who are really clever, sagacious, erudite, intelligent and wise (sayānē) prefer Bhakti and become an ardent devotees of Lord Hari instead of opting for Mukti which they prefer to spurn and cast aside¹. (7)

By following the path of Bhakti one is easily able to destroy or eliminate the root cause of all spiritual problems arising out of delusions and ignorance of the Truth (abidyā) that leads the creature to fall in the cycle of birth and death with its endless chain of miseries, pain, grief and torments². (8)

[¹To wit, those who have understood the importance of Bhakti for Lord God as a means to attain their spiritual goal, they would shun all other means to achieve it.

Lord Ram has himself emphasised the supremacy of Bhakti over Gyan in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 45.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 118 which also refers to the presence of 'avidya' or spiritual ignorance that traps the in the vortex of sufferings and miseries.]

भोजन करिअ तृपिति हित लागी । जिमि सो असन पचवै जठरागी ॥ ९ ॥
असि हरिभगति सुगम सुखदाई । को अस मूढ़ न जाहि सोहाई ॥ १० ॥

bhōjana kari'a tr̥piti hita lāgī. jimi sō asana pacavai jaṭharāgī. 9.
asi haribhagati sugama sukhadāī. kō asa mūṛha na jāhi sōhāī. 10.

It is just like the case of one eating food to satisfy his hunger and deriving pleasure from its taste, but that food quietly, imperceptibly and unconsciously nourishes the body when it is digested in the stomach by the warm gastric juices that are active there¹. (9)

[¹In a similar way, the path of Bhakti is very easy and enjoyable so much so that one can follow it effortlessly and without worrying about encountering problems. One derives a lot of pleasure by having Bhakti. It is not a dry or abstract path like the path of Gyan which entails acquisition of true knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment that leads to self-realisation. This path of Gyan is fraught with immense difficulties and numerous hurdles, and chances of success are low.

So therefore, by following the path of Bhakti one is able to attain his spiritual goals even while enjoying the journey. This is because Bhakti is naturally empowered to bless the aspirant with spiritual happiness, bliss and beatitude. It is also dear to Lord Ram, and the Lord takes care of all who prefer Bhakti over Gyan.

On the other hand, the spiritual path of Gyan is strenuous, tedious and cumbersome with so many strict vows and duties and observances to be followed that it becomes more of a burden for a creature than something one gladly looks forward to do. Gyan is like a strong male who when befriended can be of immense help and support to a person, but if the same male partner becomes angry due to some reason whatsoever then he creates a great many problems for the person.]

Say, who is so stupid and dumb that this path of Bhakti that is so easy and convenient, so comfortable and enjoyable, would not appeal to him²? (10)*

[²Who would not like to reach his destination by following a path that is straight and enjoyable, and free from troubles, uncertainties and hazards? Who would like to follow an alternate route that is very long, most difficult to traverse, and riddled with uncertain problems?]

[*Therefore, those who are wise and intelligent prefer to have Bhakti instead of Mukti. This is because if one has Bhakti, the best form of Mukti that is known as 'Kaivalya' would be easily available. It must be noted that the term 'Mukti' does not necessarily mean Kaivalya, as there are many kinds of Muktis, which broadly mean freedom—such as Jivan Mukti, Videha Mukti, Mukti from worldly problems, Mukti from bodily sufferings, Mukti from bondages etc. But these do not necessarily mean spiritual Mukti of the highest kind—it is called the Kaivalya Mukti. This sort of Mukti is attained by two paths—one is the path of Gyan, and the other is the path of Bhakti. As outlined above, the wise ones choose the latter over the former—i.e. they prefer Bhakti over Gyan. Once Bhakti comes, Kaivalya Mukti is on its way automatically.]

The benefit of following the path of Bhakti is that the basis of all spiritual ailments, such as remaining trapped in the endless cycle of birth and death in this mortal world, which is 'Avidya' (lack of correct spiritual knowledge), gets automatically eliminated, without making any special effort for getting rid of it, just like the case of one eating some delicious food to quench his hunger or for taste but as soon as the food enters the body it begins to get digested because the digestive fire burning inside the body is triggered automatically on its own, and digests the food silently without making it known to the eater. Say, is a man not a dumb fool if this miraculous Bhakti does not find favour with him?]

दो०. सेवक सेव्य भाव बिनु भव न तरिअ उरगारि ।

भजहु राम पद पंकज अस सिद्धांत बिचारि ॥ ११९ (क) ॥

dōhā.

sēvaka sēbya bhāva binu bhava na tari'a uragāri.
bhajahu rāma pada paṅkaja asa sid'dhānta bicāri. 119 (a).

Oh the enemy of serpents ("uragāri"—i.e. Garud)! Unless one develops the attitude of submission and loyalty towards Lord Ram like a loyal and faithful servant has for his benevolent master and lord, thereby thinking "I am a humble servant of my Lord, and I will serve him with utmost devotion, sincerity and faith", it is not possible to cross the mighty ocean symbolised by the cycle of birth and death in this mortal world.

Keeping this principle in mind, you (Garud) must worship Lord Ram and have single-minded devotion for him. (Doha no. 119-a)

जो चेतन कहँ जड़ करइ जड़हि करइ चैतन्य ।

अस समर्थ रघुनायकहि भजहिं जीव ते धन्य ॥ ११९ (ख) ॥

jō cētana kaham̐ jaṛa kara'i jaṛahi kara'i caitan'ya.
asa samartha raghunāyakahi bhajahiṁ jīva tē dhan'ya. 119 (b).

The Lord who is so stupendously mighty and powerful, the Lord who possesses such astounding mystical powers that he can transform inanimate entities into animate

entities, and vice versa—those Jivas (creatures; living beings) who worship such a majestic Lord as Sri Raghunayak (“raghunāyaka”—the Great King of the descends of king Raghu of Ayodhya) are indeed and without any gainsay most fortunate and blessed.¹ (Doha no. 119-b)

[¹To wit, it is just not possible to get across this vast ocean represented by the world of transmigration if one does not become firmly convinced of the eclectic view ‘I am a humble servant, and the Lord God is the one whom I serve’. So therefore, be firmly established in this view-point, and have steady and robust devotion and affection in the holy feet of Lord Ram. Those Jivas (living beings) who worship and have devotion for Lord Ram—the almighty Lord of creation who can turn the inanimate entities into animate entities, and vice versa—are indeed most fortunate and blessed.]

चौ०. कहेउँ ग्यान सिद्धांत बुझाई । सुनहु भगति मनि कै प्रभुताई ॥ १ ॥
 राम भगति चिंतामनि सुंदर । बसइ गरुड़ जाके उर अंतर ॥ २ ॥
 परम प्रकास रूप दिन राती । नहिं कछु चाहिअ दिआ घृत बाती ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kahē'um' gyāna sid'dhānta bujhā'ī. sunahu bhagati mani kai prabhutā'ī. 1.
 rāma bhagati cintāmani sundara. basa'i garuṛa jākē ura antara. 2.
 parama prakāsa rūpa dina rātī. nahim kachu cahi'a di'ā ghr̥ta bātī. 3.

In the forgoing discourse I have elucidated at length to you about the principles governing Gyan (esoteric knowledge pertaining to the mysteries of the soul, and how to attain liberation and deliverance as well as beatitude through this path; gnosis).

Now listen carefully about the profound glories, the stupendous spiritual powers, and the magnificent virtues and importance of Bhakti (devotion for Lord God) which is like a priceless Gem. (1)

Oh Garud! Lord Ram's Bhakti (having devotion, affection, love, faith, belief in the Lord; submission and surrender before him; serving him selflessly) is like a Gem known as 'Chintaamani'—a magical and priceless self-illuminated gem that removes all sorts of worries and miseries of a person who possesses it.

Any person's heart where it ('the priceless gem symbolising the eclectic spiritual virtue of Bhakti') is found --- (2)

--- is well illuminated day and night. This mystically empowered Gem is self-illuminated, and so it does not need a lamp, ghee (clarified butter) or a wick to keep it lighted with a fluorescent shine¹. (3)

[¹To wit, if Bhakti resides in the heart of a person then there is constant illumination in it. There is no chance of darkness symbolising delusions and its attendant spiritual problems, or the myriad forms of worldly worries and sufferings that normally overwhelm a person, to ever find a foothold and give trouble to him.

He is freed from all fears and worries about the fate and destiny of his soul. Any person who has given Bhakti a chance to find a permanent place in his heart does not have to worry about his spiritual well-being any longer, as this now becomes the responsibility of Lord Ram to whom Bhakti is dedicated. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 4-10 that precede Doha no. 43.

Unlike the illumination of spiritual wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation that Gyan produces, for which butter, lamp and wick are needed, i.e. for which many virtuous qualities are needed to be inculcated and carefully nurtured as outlined in the foregoing verses, the illumination produced by Bhakti is self-created; it is an incandescent light that does not need any external aid to illuminate the inner-self of the Jiva.

The sacred, divine and holy story of Lord Ram, known as the “Ram Charit Manas” has also been compared to the Chintaamani gem in its Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 32.

The verses herein below outline some of the benefits that accrue to a person who has Bhakti dwelling in his heart.]

मोह दरिद्र निकट नहिं आवा । लोभ बात नहिं ताहि बुझावा ॥ ४ ॥
 प्रबल अबिद्या तम मिटि जाई । हारहिं सकल सलभ समुदाई ॥ ५ ॥
 खल कामादि निकट नहिं जाहीं । बसइ भगति जाके उर माहीं ॥ ६ ॥

mōha daridra nikaṭa nahim āvā. lōbha bāta nahim tāhi bujhāvā. 4.
 prabala abidyā tama miṭi jāī. hārahim sakala salabha samudāī. 5.
 khala kāmādi nikaṭa nahim jāhīm. basa'i bhagati jākē ura māhīm. 6.

Once this wonderful Gem is placed in the treasury (heart) of one's inner-self, poverty symbolised by 'Moha' (worldly attractions, attachments and infatuation) does not torment him¹.

[¹This is because this Gem inherently possesses the power to remove poverty of all kinds. Whereas an ordinary Gem found in this world would remove sufferings arising out of lack of wealth and material things, the Gem in the form of Bhakti removes all sorts of spiritual troubles and worries of the devotee. 'Moha' is the root cause for all miseries and grief arising out of the various relationships that a creature establishes with the material, gross and perishable world. Bhakti diverts the attention of the creature from the illusive charm and false happiness that he thinks he would get in this mortal world of perishable things, the reason why he is attracted to the world and gets infatuated with it, to the world of eternal spiritual peace and happiness as well as contentedness that he gets by worshipping and having love and devotion for Lord Ram, the Supreme Being in a manifested form.

To wit, the bearer of this Gem does not have to suffer from the dearth of any 'spiritual riches' in the form of beatitude, blessedness, bliss, peace, happiness and contentedness in his life.]

The light that naturally emanates from this mystical Gem cannot be extinguished by the gust of wind represented by 'Lobha' (greed and temptations of the material sense objects of the world and the desire of the sense organs for gratification)².

[²This is because the light symbolising spiritual peace, beatitude, blessedness, bliss, happiness and contentedness that emanates from this mystical Gem known as 'Bhakti' comes from within it; it is self-generated. Therefore it needs no protection. It is also not like the light emanating from another Gem known as 'Gyan' because this latter Gem needs great care and constant polishing by way of following many strict spiritual observances and diligent practices to maintain its shine.

Hence, the Gem representing ‘Bhakti’ is not affected by any external factor like the case of an ordinary oil lamp whose light can be extinguished if there is a strong gust of wind, or the Gem known as ‘Gyan’ that needs constant care to maintain its brilliant shine for otherwise it would become dull and lustreless.] (4)

In the eternal light shining from this self-illuminated Gem of Bhakti, the darkness symbolising the powerful effects of ‘Avidya’ (ignorance that gives rise to delusions and its innumerable problems; lack of Vidya; lack of true and correct spiritual knowledge) is automatically eliminated³.

[³This is because ‘light’ and ‘darkness’ can’t co-exist. The light of Bhakti dispels the overpowering fear arising out of ignorance and delusions that are like the darkness of night when one is overcome with the horrifying prospects of having to face so many ghosts and phantoms representing countless miseries, grief and torments associated with the mortal life in this gross world of transmigration.]

Hordes of moths representing the many sensual pleasures and material charms of this world fail to extinguish this light of Bhakti by attacking it from all sides⁴.

[⁴Moths are attracted in droves by the flame of a lamp. They crowd around it in such huge numbers that they create a virtual blanket around the flame and suffocate it; they also jump in the flame in hordes, resulting in the flame flickering and dying away gradually. In this metaphor, the countless sensual pleasures and material charms of the world fail to disturb the inner peace and happiness of a person who has devotion for Lord God in his heart.] (5)*

Other insects representing ‘Kaam’ (lust, passion, longing) and other such wicked tormentors of the soul also aren’t able to go near the person who has Bhakti enshrined in his heart⁵.

[⁶A comprehensive list of tormentors of the creature and how they trouble him is given in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 72.] (6)*

[*The self-effusing light from this Gem helps to eliminate the darkness created by Avidya. The irritating group of insects represented by such negativities as Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, ego, pride and vanity) etc. fail to disturb the Jiva and dirty the environs of the Gem. In the case of an oil lamp, the insects are attracted to its light in their hordes, dance around its flame, get burnt, and die, littering the area around the flame and the lamp. Sometimes it often also happens that they die and fall in the oil and cover its surface with their carcasses, thereby suffocating the wick of its space and the flame of its air, and this result in the flame gradually dying away. In the case of the Gem no such thing can happen because there is no physical flame to attract the insects.

The net effect is that the person in whose heart Bhakti resides, the evil-mongering wicked fellows such as Kaam (worldly passions), Krodha (anger, wrath, fury), Lobha (greed) and their like, do not dare to come near him.]

गरल सुधासम अरि हित होई । तेहि मनि बिनु सुख पाव न कोई ॥ ७ ॥
ब्यापहिं मानस रोग न भारी । जिन्ह के बस सब जीव दुखारी ॥ ८ ॥

garala sudhāsama ari hita hōī. tēhi mani binu sukha pāva na kōī. 7.
byāpahīn mānasa rōga na bhārī. jinha kē basa saba jīva dukhārī. 8.

For a person who has this Gem in the form of Bhakti in his heart, a poison turns into nectar, and an enemy or someone who harbours animosity towards becomes a friend.

Indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, no one can find true happiness, peace, bliss and contentedness without having this miraculous Gem. (7)

Again, such a fortunate person never suffers from any of the grievous emotional problems and spiritual woes known as ‘Manas Roga’ (“mānasa rōga”—literally meaning mental diseases arising out of emotional disturbances)¹ from which countless creatures suffer interminably. (8)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 121 where Garud has asked Kaagbhusund to tell him what are the Manas Rogas; and from Chaupai line no. 28 that precedes Doha no. 121—to Doha no. 122-a where Kaagbhusund has described this spiritual disease to Garud along with its remedy.]

राम भगति मनि उर बस जाकें । दुख लवलेस न सपनेहुँ ताकें ॥ ९ ॥
चतुर सिरोमनि तेइ जग माहीं । जे मनि लागि सुजतन कराहीं ॥ १० ॥

rāma bhagati mani ura basa jākēm. dukha lavalēsa na sapanēhum̐ tākēm. 9.
catura sirōmani tē'i jaga māhīm. jē mani lāgi sujatana karāhīm. 10.

Anyone in whose subtle heart dwells the Gem representing Bhakti for Lord Ram, such a person can never suffer from a trace of grief, misery and torment of any kind even in his dream¹. (9)

Therefore, a person is said to be sagacious, erudite, wise and intelligent if he makes an auspicious and all-out diligent effort to acquire this priceless spiritual Gem, and then carefully stores it or enshrines it in the treasury of his heart. [To wit, a person who makes diligent effort to acquire this Gem of Bhakti is deemed to be the most wise, clever, intelligent and fortunate amongst all men.] (10)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 122 where a similar idea is expressed.]

सो मनि जदपि प्रगट जग अहई । राम कृपा बिनु नहिं कोउ लहई ॥ ११ ॥
सुगम उसाय पाइबे केरे । नर हतभाज्य देहिं भटभेरे ॥ १२ ॥

sō mani jadapi pragaṭa jaga ahaī. Rāma kṛpā binu nahim kō'u lahaī. 11.
sugama upāya pā'ibē kērē. Nara hatabhāgya dēhim bhaṭabhērē. 12.

Though the astounding spiritual value and magnificent glory of this Gem (Bhakti) is so obvious in this world, yet one is not able to access or acquire it without the grace of Lord Ram. [This Gem known as ‘Bhakti’ is not like some precious jewel of this material world that one can find by making concerted effort to acquire it. This Bhakti can only be accessed if Lord Ram shows his grace and kindness upon a seeker.] (11)*

Fortunately, the ways and means to access this valuable Gem are also very easy, but the irony is that those who are unlucky and ill-fated fail to employ these opportunities and remain deprived of this priceless jewel¹. (12)*

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 128—to Doha no. 131 where sage Valmiki has listed the many easy ways by which one can develop Bhakti for Lord Ram; (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36 where Lord Ram has outlined to Sabari the simple ways to obtain Bhakti; (iii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 45; and Doha no. 46 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it where Lord Ram has outlined the simple ways to obtain Bhakti to the citizens of Ayodhya.

*All said and done, this Gem is accessible only when Lord Ram becomes graceful and favourable upon the devotee. This too is very easy (because the Lord is gracious and merciful and obliging by nature, and a simple request or prayer is sufficient to make the Lord grant this Gem to the devotee), but the irony is that still the unfortunate man rejects it. In the absence of true knowledge and awareness of who Lord Ram is, the ignorant man thinks that he is submitting himself to heresy, and prefers to follow the troublesome and arduous path of Gyan in his endeavour to seek Mukti for himself.]

पावन पर्वत बेद पुराना । राम कथा रुचिराकर नाना ॥ १३ ॥

मर्मि सज्जन सुमति कुदारी । ग्यान बिराग नयन उरगारी ॥ १४ ॥

pāvana parbata bēda purānā. rāma kathā rucirākara nānā. 13.
marmī sajjana sumati kudārī. gyāna birāga nayana uragārī. 14.

[Using symbols from Nature, Kaagbhusund says—] The scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans are like the sacred mountains (because they are enormous in their size). The many enchanting stories and fascinating events associated with the life and time of Lord Ram are like the many mines and caves (of precious stones) that are found on these mountains. (13)*

Saints and devotees are the people who know the secret of these mines and caves, and how to extract the precious gems hidden in them (like expert minerologists do).

A wise mind and its intelligence is like the sharp pickaxe that is used to dig out the precious gems (representing spiritual rewards that are got by a person who pursues Bhakti).

Gyan (true and analytical knowledge) and Vairagya (renunciation, detachment and dispassion) are the two eyes of such saints and devotees (who are like the minerologists)¹. (14)*

[*The scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans are like the holy Mountains; the divine story of Lord Ram, with its numerous versions and interpretations, are like the numerous mines (caves) in them (where spiritual secrets lie hidden and buried); the many sages and saints are the wise ones who know about them and their sacred location (i.e. they can unravel the mysteries of the story and explain them to the eager hearer); and the wise intellect and mind are like the spade, the shovel and the pick-axe which are to be used to unearth the gems hidden in them (i.e. to unravel the holiness, the divinity and spiritual message contained in the story of Lord Ram).

The two eyes needed to see this treasure are represented by the twin virtues of Gyan and Vairagya. One must have a deep and penetrating intellect to understand the import of the message contained in the divine story, and he must have the virtue of renunciation and detachment from this world so that he can concentrate upon benefiting from this knowledge without getting constantly distracted and disturbed by the tug and pull of the mundane world.

¹To wit, in order to mine the spiritual treasure represented by Bhakti, one must have the two indispensable virtues of 'Gyan' and 'Vairagya'. Just like a blind person who stumbles and falls repeatedly, and it becomes too difficult for him to reach his destination, a spiritual aspirant who has no Gyan and Vairagya in him also finds it virtually impossible to access Bhakti that would grant him sustainable spiritual blessedness, beatitude, felicity, bliss, happiness, contentedness etc, as well as liberation and deliverance from all sorts of worldly sufferings that come naturally with Bhakti.

In the absence of Gyan and Vairagya, even if a person manages to find the Gem known as Bhakti, it would be too hard for him to protect it just like a blind man who may have a priceless gem in his possession but would not be able to protect it from thieves or even his jealous friends who are envious of his good fortune.

This observation is extremely significant in the context of earlier statements where it was said that Gyan is very cumbersome and one should try to steer clear of it. But by likening Gyan as one of the eyes of a wise spiritual seeker of Bhakti, its importance and value is established beyond doubt. In fact, 'Gyan' as one of the two main tools for accessing Bhakti, the other being 'Vairagya'. It is stressed here that Gyan plays an important role in one's spiritual welfare, and it should not be overlooked or undermined or neglected while one pursues Bhakti.

This is because without having true knowledge, enlightenment and wisdom, Bhakti becomes a blind pursuit. Like a blind man groping in the dark to reach his destination, and even if he manages to find what he has been searching for he is not sure of what he has found, a person who does not know his spiritual goal or whom he is worshipping, if he worships some God just because others are doing it, he is bound to falter easily and overcome with doubts and uncertainties when confronted by some fact that is beyond his understanding.

The simplest example we have is that of Garud himself in this Ramayan. He is an eternal companion of Lord Vishnu as he is the Lord's vehicle, his mount, but he too was overcome with doubt about the reality of Lord Ram, which led him to Kaagbhusund and listen to the story of Lord Ram and told about the truth of the Lord's actual identity. After having Gyan, or true knowledge of who the Lord was, Garud's doubts and confusions vanished. So the importance of 'Gyan' as an instrument to reinforce Bhakti cannot be underestimated.

Similarly, 'Vairagya' is essential for Bhakti to take a firm root in the heart of the devotee. A person can do one thing at a time; otherwise he would be too distracted to focus on his goal if he tries many things at the same time. If the mind and the heart of a spiritual aspirant are distracted by the countless temptations from the material objects of the world, if the aspirant fails to practice renunciation and detach himself from the world, he won't be able to focus on his actual goal of attaining spiritual blessedness. It is just like a college student or a researcher in an university who does not focus on his studies and wastes his time in worthless indulgences. Either he would fail his exams or pass with a very dismal grade.]

भाव सहित खोजइ जो प्रानी । पाव भगति मनि सब सुख खानी ॥ १५ ॥
मोरें मन प्रभु अस बिस्वासा । राम ते अधिक राम कर दासा ॥ १६ ॥

bhāva sahita khōja'i jō prānī. pāva bhagati mani saba sukha khānī. 15.
mōrēm mana prabhu asa bisvāsā. rāma tē adhika rāma kara dāsā. 16.

A man who searches for this Gem known as Bhakti with due sincerity and devotion (commitment and diligence) is sure to find it. This Gem is a treasury that is full of all happiness and joy for him; it is a giver of all happiness and joy to him. [To wit, Bhakti grants bliss, beatitude, felicity and blessedness to its adherents. It grants to its followers liberation and deliverance from all miseries and sufferings. It bestows emancipation and salvation to the soul.] (15)

In my (Kaagbhushund's) view, the devotee of Lord Ram is superior to the Lord himself¹. (16)

[¹Refer also to Tulsidas' Book of Wisdom, known as 'Dohawali', verse nos. 473 and 528 where also it is said that a devotee of the Lord is more important than the Lord himself.]

राम सिंधु घन सज्जन धीरा । चंदन तरु हरि संत समीरा ॥ १७ ॥
सब कर फल हरि भगति सुहाई । सो बिनु संत न काहूँ पाई ॥ १८ ॥
अस बिचारि जोइ कर सतसंगा । राम भगति तेहि सुलभ बिहंगा ॥ १९ ॥

rāma sindhu ghana sajjana dhīrā. candana taru hari santa samīrā. 17.
saba kara phala hari bhagati suhāī. sō binu santa na kāhūṁ pāī. 18.
asa bicāri jō'i kara satasaṅgā. rāma bhagati tēhi sulabha bihaṅgā. 19.

If Lord Ram is the ocean, then the wise men (who are devoted to him and possess the Gem of Bhakti) are like the rain-bearing clouds¹.

[¹The ocean is full of water, but it is of no use to the world because its water cannot irrigate fields and produce crop. The salty and dirty water of the ocean evaporates to form clouds. The water molecules in the cloud are free from their salty origin; they are clean and sweet. When this water, which has its origin in the ocean, begins to shower down upon the earth as rain, it fosters life and greenery everywhere. Harvest and life directly depend upon rain-water, and not at all upon the ocean, though the origin of the rain is in the ocean which is a vast reservoir of water, but the rain benefits the population more directly. This is exactly what is meant here. Though the divine story of Lord Ram is a vast reservoir of spirituality and bliss, its benefit can be enjoyed only when it is explained by wise men, and when the seeker accesses the key to his happiness and bliss, which is Bhakti.]

In the same way, if Lord Hari is like the tree of sandalwood, the saints and sages are like the gust of soft wind (that takes the sweet fragrance of the sandalwood and helps to spread it far and wide)².

[²The saints and sages help to propagate the virtue of Bhakti and other spiritual fruits contained in the divine story of Lord Ram, and make them easily

available to this world, in its farthest corner, just like the wind carries the fragrance of the sandalwood to distant places, far away from the physical location of the actual tree.] (17)

Bhakti is the best fruit of all spiritual endeavours, and no one can get it (recognize this fruit amongst the cluster of so many assorted fruits or rewards) without the help of saints and sages who help a person to recognise the true rewards that come by following the path of Bhakti. (18)

Realising the importance of saints and other wise ones in the effort to attain the Gem of Bhakti, anyone who seeks such exalted souls and establishes communion with them is easily able to acquire the Gem of Bhakti of Lord Ram³.

[³Earlier in Chaupai line no. 14 it has already been said that wise saints are like expert minerologists who know how to dig and extract the priceless gem from the mine present in the mountains symbolising the voluminous text of the scriptures. Company of such wise men helps a spiritual aspirant in many ways. It helps him to remove his doubts; it helps him to chose the correct path; it helps him avoid pitfalls; it helps him to discover the reward when it comes.

Even Lord Ram has stressed the importance of saints in the path of attainment of Bhakti in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 45 while he was preaching the citizens of Ayodhya on the glories of Bhakti.] (19)

दो०. ब्रह्म पयोनिधि मंदर ग्यान संत सुर आहिं ।

कथा सुधा मथि काढ़हिं भगति मधुरता जाहिं ॥ १२० (क) ॥

dōhā.

brahma payōnidhi mandara gyāna santa sura āhim.

kathā sudhā mathi kāṛhahim bhagati madhuratā jāhim. 120 (a).

‘Brahm’ (the cosmic Consciousness, the knowledge of which is the subject matter of all research, discussion, exposition and elucidation in the Vedas, the Purans and other scriptures) is like a vast and fathomless ocean, ‘Gyan’ (the knowledge of this Brahm; gnosis; enlightenment and true wisdom) is like Mt. Mandrachal (which was used in some ancient time to churn this ocean in search of Amrit, the nectar of eternity and bliss), and ‘Saints’ are like the Gods (who had churned the cosmic ocean using this mountain as the churning rod to extract Amrit from the cosmic water)¹.

These saints thoroughly study, analyse, understand and discuss the scriptures in order to extract their essence in the form of the divine, holy and sacred stories of the Lord (Sri Ram) that is extremely sweet and pleasant like nectar, and would provide nourishment to the Atma or the soul of all living beings by granting them abiding blessedness, a sense of spiritual contentedness and fulfilment, and joy, happiness, bliss, felicity and beatitude in mighty abundance². (Doha no. 120-a)

[¹This metaphor alludes to the legendary churning of the ocean by the Gods in search of Amrit, the nectar of eternity and bliss. At that time, they had used this mountain as the churning rod.

²In this Doha, Brahm is likened to the cosmic ocean because Brahm is as vast and all-encompassing like it. The entire universe was filled with the cosmic ether from which

the first signs of creation emerged in the form of sound waves. Brahm represents that cosmic Consciousness which first created the ripples of sound waves in the cosmic ether to mark the beginning of the new phase of creation. Brahm fills the entire universe just like water fills the entire ocean and ether fills the cosmic sky.

Just like the case of the huge bowl of earth acting as a container or vessel or receptacle filled with water which we recognise as an 'ocean' in terrestrial terms, and the sky is the cosmic bowl that is filled with ether at the macro-level of creation which we recognise as the cosmos or the universe, the knowledge of Brahm that is contained in the scriptures is similarly a vast and fathomless metaphoric ocean that is a huge reservoir of spiritual knowledge.

The ocean is full of fascinating mysteries and is a virtual miniature cosmos with its independent marine culture and ecosystem. It is different from life as we know it from what we see and understand of it on the land. No one has ever been able to map the ocean fully, and no one would ever know the whole truth that lies in its vast bowl and an endless realm. The ocean surrounds the land-mass of earth and appears to support it from below because the earth appears to be floating on its surface like a ball.

The ocean is therefore compared to Brahm because Brahm is also measureless, endless and fathomless like the ocean, is mysterious and fascinating like the ocean, and surrounds and supports the entire creation like the ocean appears to do in relation to the land-mass of earth.

In some ancient time, the Gods had churned the cosmic ocean to extract Amrit, the nectar of eternity and bliss. So likewise, erudite and sagacious saints read and analyse the scriptures to extract their essence in the form of the divine stories of the Lord God, stories that bestow spiritual blessedness, bliss, peace, happiness and contentedness to the reader and the listener alike. These sacred stories of the Lord provide liberation and deliverance from all worldly miseries and torments to the reader as well as the listener; these holy stories grant emancipation and salvation to the soul of both of them.

In brief, the knowledge of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness and the Supreme Being, that is contained in the Vedas is like the vast cosmic ocean; the virtue of Gyan is like the Mandraachal Mountain; and the saints and wise ones are like the Gods who had churned this ocean to extract Amrit from its bowls.

Anyone who symbolically churns this ocean is able to extract the Amrit or nectar of eternity and bliss. To wit, any wise, erudite and sagacious person, such as a saint, who thoroughly studies, understands and analyses the scriptures is able to extract their essence in the form of the glorious virtue of 'Bhakti' that is the central message contained in all the divine stories of the Lord God found in the scriptures. This message is like a spiritual nectar as it provides an immense sense of blessedness, joy, bliss and ecstasy to all who preach it and hear it. This nectar also grants liberation and deliverance from all the horrors and miseries of mortal life; it bestows emancipation and salvation to the soul of the teacher as well as the disciple.]

बिरति चर्म असि ग्यान मद लोभ मोह रिपु मारि ।

जय पाइअ सो हरि भगति देखु खगेस बिचारि ॥ १२० (ख) ॥

birati carma asi gyāna mada lōbha mōha ripu māri.
jaya pā'i'a sō hari bhagati dēkhu khagēsa bicāri. 120 (b).

[The analogy of a warrior defeating his enemies to obtain victory is used here to emphasise the importance of Bhakti for a person to help him eliminate all spiritual hurdles in life to obtain abiding peace and happiness as well as liberation and deliverance for his soul.]

Using 'Vairagya' (dispassion, detachment and renunciation) as an impregnable shield for self-defence, employing the symbolic sword of 'Gyan' (gnosis; truthful knowledge, self-realisation, wisdom and enlightenment) to slay the countless enemies represented by the hordes of spiritual tormentors such as 'Mada' (arrogance, haughtiness, pride and ego), 'Lobha' (greed and rapacity for material things and riches of the gross world, and a desire for comfort and pleasure that is derived from them), 'Moha' (infatuation and attachment with such things)—it is indeed 'Bhakti' of Lord Hari (devotion for Lord Sri Ram) that helps the living being to attain victory over his (spiritual) tormentors and enemies in this world who had earlier robbed him of all his peace and happiness.

Oh the King of Birds (khagēsa)! Reflect over this matter deeply and try to understand its implications and import. [Oh Garud, you must understand that it is actually the glorious virtue of 'Bhakti' for Lord Ram which stands close to a devotee to help him fight his spiritual tormentors like a faithful companion of a warrior who stands by his side, shoulder-to-shoulder, does to help him defeat his enemies.]¹ (Doha no. 120-b)

[¹To wit, it is the Bhakti for Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram) that protects the devotee with the help of the shield symbolized by the virtue of Vairagya, and kills his enemies represented by Mada, Lobha and Moha by using the sword of Gyan to make him fearless.

Mada, Lobha, Moha are some of the spiritual enemies of a person. They are called 'enemies' because they keep tormenting him and prevent him from attaining peace and happiness in life. To overcome these enemies, a person needs to have a good friend and a comrade-in-arms by his side, and he finds such a true friend in the form of the virtue of 'Bhakti'.

Further, to defeat such formidable enemies, one needs to have a shield symbolised by the virtue of 'Vairagya', and a weapon in the form of a sword symbolised by the virtue of 'Gyan'. He uses this sword of Gyan to eliminate his spiritual enemies, and in case he is attacked directly by them he uses the shield of Vairagya to protect himself.

To wit, a wise, erudite and sagacious spiritual aspirant uses knowledge and wisdom to overcome the numerous faults and shortcomings that afflict his inner-self like so many spiritual diseases so as to pave the way to perfection, holiness, purity and piety of the soul. Then he uses the virtue of dispassion and detachment to overcome the formidable forces of temptation and gnawing desire for gratification that arise from the material world of sense objects and their countless charms. 'Victory' in this battle is attainment of eternal spiritual peace, tranquillity, joy and happiness for the aspirant; it is attainment of liberation and deliverance from all miseries, sufferings and pains in life in this mortal world; it is obtaining final emancipation and salvation for his soul so that he is freed from the cycle of birth and death once and for all.]

(6.14) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 122 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-19 that precede it:

The glories and great spiritual rewards of Bhakti have once again been reiterated in these verses as follows:

रघुपति भगति सजीवन मूरी । अनूपान श्रद्धा मति पूरी ॥ ७ ॥
एहि बिधि भलेहिं सो रोग नसाहीं । नाहिं त जतन कोटि नहिं जाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

raghupati bhagati sajīvana mūrī. anūpāna śrad'dhā mati pūrī. 7.
ēhi bidhi bhalēhiṁ sō rōga nasāhīṁ. nāhiṁ ta jatana kōṭi nahīṁ jāhīṁ. 8.

Devotion for and worship of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) is like the life-giving herb known as 'Sanjivani' that is used a recipe to treat the disease¹.

[¹This herb has a magical power to revive a person even if he is on the death-bed. It has tremendous rejuvenating potentials. To wit, devotion for and worship of Lord Ram acts as the chief medicine to treat one's spiritual torments.]

A devout mind and an intellect that is infused with faith and belief in the Lord is the medium by which the remedy is administered².

[²Even in modern medicine, some medium is employed to administer the basic drug or its necessary ingredients to the patient. It may be in the form of a tablet or a capsule or a liquid that is taken orally, or some form of a liquid that is injected directly in the blood. But a medium is needed nonetheless; raw drug can't be administered to the patient. In this metaphor, a devout mind that has faith in the Lord God is the medium by which worship and devotion is made possible.] (7)

This is the way (as outlined herein above) by which these diseases can be eradicated, otherwise there is no chance at all even by making countless other types of efforts. (8)

जानिअ तब मन बिरुज गोसाँई । जब उर बल बिराग अधिकाई ॥ ९ ॥
सुमति छुधा बाढ़इ नित नई । बिषय आस दुर्बलता गई ॥ १० ॥

jāni'a taba mana biruja gōsāmī. jaba ura bala birāga adhikāī. 9.
sumati chudhā bāṛha'i nita naī. biṣaya āsa durbalatā gaī. 10.

Oh Lord (gōsāmī)! One should regard the Mana (mind and sub-conscious) as being free from all diseases (emotional and spiritual problems) when these symptoms manifest themselves: The virtue of 'Vairagya' (renunciation, detachment, dispassion) is strengthened (becomes firmly rooted) in one's heart [9]; the intellect that is pure and free from all corruptions and taints ignites appetite (desire) for acquisition of wisdom and true knowledge; and weakness in the form of desire for enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the world is overcome [10]¹. (9-10)

[¹When the proper medicine is administered to a patient he begins to recover from his disease. Here since this disease is not a physical disease of the body but problems of

the mind and heart that affect the spiritual well-being of a creature, the three chief signs that indicate that he is progressing satisfactorily are listed in these two verses. When a person is sick he loses his hunger; when he is cured the first sign is reappearance of his appetite. So likewise, when a person is overcome with spiritual problems, he loses all interest in wisdom and self-realisation. When he recovers from his fallen position, he once again begins to pursue the path of wisdom and knowledge. The virtue of renunciation helps him in this path. The temptations of the world acted as a drag upon his progress, but once he is wisened he overcomes this hurdle too.]

बिमल ग्यान जल जब सो नहाई । तब रह राम भगति उर छाई ॥ ११ ॥
 सिव अज सुक सनकादिक नारद । जे मुनि ब्रह्म बिचार बिसारद ॥ १२ ॥
 सब कर मत खगनायक एहा । करिअ राम पद पंकज नेहा ॥ १३ ॥
 श्रुति पुरान सब ग्रंथ कहाहीं । रघुपति भगति बिना सुख नाही ॥ १४ ॥

bimala gyāna jala jaba sō nahā'ī. taba raha rāma bhagati ura chā'ī. 11.
 siva aja suka sanakādika nārada. jē muni brahma bicāra bisārada. 12.
 saba kara mata khaganāyaka ēhā. kari'a rāma pada pañkaja nēhā. 13.
 śruti purāna saba grantha kahāhīm. raghupati bhagati binā sukha nāhīm. 14.

In this way, when the creature finally recovers from his spiritual and emotional diseases, he would need to take a symbolic bath to clean and freshen himself just in the manner of a person who needs to take a bath after he recovers from a long-drawn fever which lasted for a long period of time.

The water needed for this symbolic bath (of spiritual rejuvenation) is in the form of wisdom, true knowledge, enlightenment and self-realisation (bimala gyāna jala). Having bathed and refreshed himself thus, the aspirant feels spiritual rejuvenated as he finds devotion and affection for Lord Ram spreading and covering the whole of his heart. (11)

Lord Shiva, the creator Brahma (aja), sage Suka (the parrot saint), the celestial sages Sankadi and Narad, and other such exalted sages who are experts in the knowledge of Brahm (the Supreme Being) --- (12)

--- It is their unanimous view, oh the king of birds (khaganāyaka), that one should have devotion and affection for the lotus-like holy feet of Lord Ram. (13)

The Vedas, the Purans and all other scriptures unequivocally assert that there is no happiness and peace without having devotion (Bhakti) for Lord Ram. (14)

कमठ पीठ जामहिं बरु बारा । बंध्या सुत बरु काहुहि मारा ॥ १५ ॥
 फूलहिं नभ बरु बहुबिधि फूला । जीव न लह सुख हरि प्रतिकूला ॥ १६ ॥

kamaṭha pīṭha jāmahiṁ baru bārā. bandhyā suta baru kāhuhi mārā. 15.
 phūlahiṁ nabha baru bahubidhi phūlā. jīva na laha sukha hari pratikūlā. 16.

It may be remotely possible that hairs grow on the back of a tortoise, or a son born of a barren woman (who cannot produce children), or many types of flowers bloom in

the sky¹—but it is absolutely impossible for a Jiva (creature) to find happiness and peace by turning away or being opposed to Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Ram). (15-16)

[¹These three things are impossible to happen. But even if by some remotest of a miraculous chance these things can materialise, still it is impossible to have peace and happiness by turning against the Lord God. To wit, in all sooth and without gainsay in the least, it is certain that if one does not have devotion for Lord God he cannot have happiness and peace in his life no matter what he does to achieve them; there is no doubt about it.

The same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 115.]

Other instances are given below to stress this point.]

तृषा जाइ बरु मृगजल पाना । बरु जामहिं सस सीस बिषाना ॥ १७ ॥
अंधकारु बरु रबिहि नसावै । राम बिमुख न जीव सुख पावै ॥ १८ ॥

tr̥ṣā jā'i baru mṛgajala pānā. baru jāmahiṁ sasa sīsa biṣānā. 17.
andhakāru baru rabihi nasāvai. rāma bimukha na jīva sukha pāvai. 18.

Again, it may be remotely possible to quench one's thirst by drinking water seen in a desert mirage, or horns grow on the head of a rabbit, or darkness of the night destroys the light of the sun and eclipse it (which are impossible things)¹—but it is absolutely impossible for a Jiva (creature) to find happiness and peace by turning away or being opposed to Lord Ram. (17-18)

[¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 72.]

हिम ते अनल प्रगट बरु होई । बिमुख राम सुख पाव न कोई ॥ १९ ॥

hima tē anala pragaṭa baru hō'ī. bimukha rāma sukha pāva na kō'ī. 19.

Yet again, it may be remotely possible that fire erupts from ice—but it is absolutely impossible to be happy and peaceful by turning against or be opposed to Lord Ram (i.e. not having devotion, affection and faith in the Lord; not submitting to the Lord and worshipping him). (19)

दो०. बारि मथें घृत होइ बरु सिकता ते बरु तेल ।
बिनु हरि भजन न भव तरिअ यह सिद्धांत अपेल ॥ १२२ (क) ॥

dōhā.

bāri mathēm ghr̥ta hō'i baru sikaṭā tē baru tēla.
binu hari bhajana na bhava tari'a yaha sid'dhānta apēla. 122 (a).

[Other impossible things are cited here.] It may be remotely possible to extract clarified butter (known as Ghee) by churning water, or oil by crusing sand particles (like one can extract oil by crushing the seeds of sesame or any other oil-bearing plant)—but it is absolutely impossible to cross this vast and intractable ocean-like world of transmigration without worshipping (and having devotion for) Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Ram)¹. This is an inviolable principle, and there is no exception to it. (Doha no. 122-a)

[¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 90 where a similar idea is expressed.]

मसकहि करइ बिरंचि प्रभु अजहि मसक ते हीन ।
अस बिचारि तजि संसय रामहि भजहिं प्रबीन ॥ १२२ (ख) ॥

masakahi kara'i biran̄ci prabhu ajahi masaka tē hīna.
asa bicāri taji sansaya rāmahi bhajahim̄ prabīna. 122 (b).

The almighty, omnipotent and all-able Lord God (Sri Ram) can transform the humblest of creatures like a mosquito into someone as exalted, honourable and great as the Creator known as Biranchi (Lord Brahma, the first of the Trinity of Gods), and at the same time can degrade Brahma into a lowly and inconsequential form of a mosquito.

Keeping this in mind, a wise and clever person is one who abandons all doubts and confusions in this regard, and instead concentrates on worshipping and having devotion for Lord Ram. (Doha no. 122-b)

श्लोक. विनिश्चितं वदामि ते न अन्यथा वचांसि मे ।
हरिं नरा भजन्ति येऽतिदुस्तरं तरन्ति ते ॥ १२२ (ग) ॥

ślōka.

viniścitaṁ vadāmi tē na an'yathā vacānsi mē.
hariṁ narā bhajanti yē 'tidustaraṁ taranti tē. 122 (c).

I (Kaagbhusund) advice you (Garud) about a principle that is sacrosanct as I have thoroughly tested and verified it to be true, inviolable and unchallengable—and my words are true and honest—that those creatures who worship and have devotion for Lord Hari (Sri Ram) can very easily cross over this formidable ocean-like world of transmigration that is otherwise impossible to cross. (Shloka no. 122-c)

[This is actually the third part of Doha no. 122, but since it is in the Sanskrit language it is named as a 'Shloka'.]

(6.15) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 126 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it:

Lord Shiva asserts that pilgrimage to holy places and other means done for self-purification, perfection or attaining expertise in meditation and contemplation (Yoga), renunciation (Viraag), acquisition of true knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment (Gyan), doing sacred rites and religious practices (Karma and Dharma), keeping vows and doing charitable deeds (Vrat and Daan), practicing self-control and austerity (Sam and Dam), repeating holy formulas (Japa), doing various kinds of penances and fire sacrifices (Tapa and Yagya), showing compassion to all living beings (Bhut Daya), doing service to Brahmins and one's Guru, study, modesty, wisdom, good character and nobility of mind etc., and all other exemplary virtues so much extolled in the Vedas—all of them have but one fruit, and it is to have devotion for Lord Hari (the Supreme Being). And a person can attain Bhakti, a spiritual virtue that is rare even for great sages to acquire, by hearing the divine glories of Lord Ram with great faith and belief in one's heart.

तीर्थाटन साधन समुदाई । जोग बिराग ग्यान निपुनाई ॥ ४ ॥

नाना कर्म धर्म ब्रत दाना । संजम दम जप तप मख नाना ॥ ५ ॥

भूत दया द्विज गुर सेवकाई । बिद्या बिनय बिबेक बड़ाई ॥ ६ ॥

tīrthāṭana sādhanā samudā'ī. jōga birāga gyāna nipunā'ī. 4.
nānā karma dharma brata dānā. sanjama dama japa tapa makha nānā. 5.
bhūta dayā dvija gura sēvakā'ī. bidyā binaya bibēka baṛā'ī. 6.

[Now in these verses are listed some of the best means prescribed by the scriptures by which a creature can attain spiritual blessedness and eternal bliss, and then goes on to say that the best reward of all these practices is to have abiding and true Bhakti or devotion for Lord Ram. This virtue of 'Bhakti' proves to the legendary Kalpa Tree for the devotee as it fulfils all his desires, both the temporal as well as the spiritual.]

There are indeed many spiritual path (prescribed by the Vedas) that are all meritorious and effective in themselves (sādhanā samudā'ī). Some of them are the following: Pilgrimage to holy places (tīrthāṭana), doing Yoga (meditation that leads to the union of the individual's soul with the Supreme Cosmic Soul— jōga), practicing the virtues of renunciation, detachment and dispassion (birāga), becoming an expert in wisdom and knowledge leading to enlightenment and self-realisation (gyāna nipunā'ī) --- (4)

Doing various kinds of meritorious religious deeds, undertaking many kinds of religious observances and vows, practicing numerous religious rites and sacraments (nānā karma), following the righteous path that is auspicious, proper and noble (dharma), keeping vows (brata), making charities and donations (dānā), practicing strict self-control over one's sense organs and diligently observing the principles of self-restraint and abstinence from all sorts of indulgences (sanjama dama), saying of prayers and repeating holy spiritual formulas (japa), doing penance and observing austerity (tapa), doing various fire sacrifices (makha nānā)--- (5)

Being merciful and compassionate towards other living beings (bhūta dayā), doing service to those who are elderly, learned and wise, as well as serving one's

teacher and preceptor (dvija gura sēvakāī), possessing the virtues of wisdom and true knowledge (and honouring those who possess these qualities) (bidyā), being polite and humble (binaya), having intelligence and prudence (bibēka), and honouring others who have any of these glorious virtues (baṛāī). (6)

जहँ लगी साधन बेद बखानी । सब कर फल हरि भगति भवानी ॥ ७ ॥
सो रघुनाथ भगति श्रुति गाई । राम कृपाँ काहूँ एक पाई ॥ ८ ॥

jaham̐ lagi sādhana bēda bakhānī. saba kara phala hari bhagati bhavānī. 7.
sō raghunātha bhagati śruti gāī. rāma kṛpām̐ kāhūm̐ ēka pāī. 8.

Oh Bhavani (which is one of the many names of Lord Shiva's consort)! Whatever kind of spiritual means that the Vedas have prescribed and described, all have one thing in common, and it is this: the best reward that a creature gets by practicing them is to be blessed by having Bhakti (devotion) for Lord Hari (Lord God; Lord Ram) (7)

But this Bhakti for Lord Raghunath (the Lord of the Raghus; one of the many names of Sri Ram) is attainable only rarely by someone upon whom Lord Ram has become benevolent and graceful¹. (8)

[¹To wit, the best reward of practicing all the religious and meritorious deeds prescribed by the Vedas is to find spiritual blessedness by way of having devotion for Lord Ram. But this eclectic reward is attainable only if the Lord shows his grace upon the fortunate creature.]

दो०. मुनि दुर्लभ हरि भगति नर पावहिं बिनहिं प्रयास ।
जे यह कथा निरंतर सुनहिं मानि बिस्वास ॥ १२६ ॥

dōhā.

muni durlabha hari bhagati nara pāvahim̐ binahim̐ prayāsa.
jē yaha kathā nirantara sunahim̐ māni bisvāsa. 126.

That eclectic spiritual reward known as 'Bhakti' which is difficult even for great sages and seers to obtain (inspite of making so many efforts as enumerated in the aforesaid verses), is however easily and readily available, without the least difficulty, to those persons who regularly hear this sacred story of Lord Ram with faith and devotion. (Doha no. 126)"

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Bhakti Sutra Mala

The Devotional Path to God-Realisation

[Roman Transliteration of Text, English Exposition, Elaborate Notes on
Ram Charit Manas; Dohawali; Adhyatma Ramayan;
Tripadvibhūt Mahānāyan Upanishad; Krishna's Geeta—canto 12;
Narad Bhakti Sutra & Shandilya Bhakti Sutra]

Chapter 2

‘Dohawali’ of Goswami Tulsidas

‘Dohawali’ is an excellent Book consisting of two-line verses called ‘Doha’. It was written by Goswami Tulsidas, the saint-poet who had also composed Ram Charit Manas, the famed epic that narrates the divine story of Lord Ram with an exceptional quotient of devotion woven into its text.

There are some verses in ‘Dohawali’ that exclusively deal with the theme of ‘Bhakti’. We shall now read them herein below:-

Dohawali verse no. 22:

बिगरी जनम अनेक की सुधरै अबहीं आजु ।
होहि राम को नाम जपु तुलसी तजि कुसमाजु ॥ 22 ॥

bigarī janama anēka kī sudharai abahīm āju.
hōhi rāma kō nāma japu tulasī taji kusamāju. 22 .

Tulsidas advises a seeker: 'You should abandon all bad company and thought from your mind, and instead you should identify yourself with Lord Ram (i.e. surrender yourself to Ram) and repeat the Lord's divine Name. By doing so, all the accumulated bad effects of the deeds done by you in so many previous births can be rectified immediately and instantly.' (22)

[Note—The ‘bad company and bad thought’ are those that keep the creature entangled in the web of this deluding world and eclipsed in the darkness of ignorance. Such a creature remains permanently trapped in the cesspool of birth and death and their attendant horrors.

If, however, such a creature is wise enough to take the shelter of Lord Ram and his holy Name then his liberation and deliverance from this quagmire is assured.]

Dohawali verse no. 23:

प्रीति प्रतीति सुरीति सों राम राम जपु राम ।
तुलसी तेरो है भलो आदि मध्य परिनाम ॥ 23 ॥

prīti pratīti surīti sōm rāma rāma japu rāma.
tulasī tērō hai bhalō ādi madhya parināma. 23.

Tulsidas says that one should do Japa¹ (repetition) of Lord Ram's holy Name with great faith, intense love, a high level of devotion and a firm conviction, as well as according to the prescribed method, because by doing so one will have all-round welfare and access to all types of good fortunes in the present time, in the middle of the future, and even in the distant future. (23)

Dohawali verse no. 40:

रसना साँपिनि बदन बिल जे न जपहिं हरिनाम ।
तुलसी प्रेम न राम सों ताहि बिधाता बाम ॥ 40 ॥

rasanā sām̐pini badana bila jē na japahim harināma.
tulasī prēma na rāma sōm tāhi bidhātā bāma. 40 .

Tulsidas says the tongue of those who do not chant Sri Hari's (Ram's) Name is like a serpent which only pours venom in the form of worldly talks, and their mouth is like the serpent's pit (hole). Those who have no love for Lord Ram, the creator appears to be opposed to them (i.e. they are most unlucky, for then they can never ever hope to get any peace, happiness and bliss anywhere in this world). (40)

Dohawali verse no. 45:

रहैं न जल भरि पूरि राम सुजस सुनि रावरो ।
तिन आँखिन में धूरि भरि भरि मूठी मेलिये ॥ 45 ॥

rahaiṁ na jala bhari pūri rāma sujasa suni rāvarō.
tina āṁkhina mēm dhūri bhari bhari mūṭhī mēliyē. 45 .

'Oh Sri Ram! Those eyes which do not well-up with devotional and affectionate tears on hearing your name should be stuffed with fistful of dust (i.e. they are worthless and have no right to see).' (45)

Dohawali verse no. 47:

साहिब होत सरोष सेवक को अपराध सुनि ।

अपने देखे दोष सपनेहु राम न उर धरे ॥ 47 ॥

sāhiba hōta sarōṣa sēvaka kō aparādha muni.
apanē dēkhē dōṣa sapanēhu rāma na ura dharē. 47 .

Other masters become angry and annoyed immediately on hearing the mistakes or wrong-doings of their servants or subordinates (without finding out the actual facts), but Lord Ram is so magnanimous, forgiving and gracious that he does not pay any heed to such errors even when he has seen them himself (i.e. Lord Ram does not bother about the faults and shortcomings of his devotees; he overlooks them). (47)

Dohawali verse no. 48:

तुलसी रामहि आपु तें सेवक की रुचि मीठि ।
सीतापति से साहिबहि कैसे दीजै पीठि ॥ 48 ॥

tulasī rāmaḥi āpu tēm sēvaka kī ruci mīṭhi.
sītāpati sē sāhibahi kaisē dījai pīṭhi. 48 .

Tulsidas says that Lord Ram favours (i.e. gives precedence, more priority and importance to) the needs, the interests, the wishes and the desires of his servants (i.e. devotees, followers, subordinates) more than his own. He (Tulsidas) wonders why then should one oppose (i.e. not follow) such a Lord and Master (who is so benevolent, gracious, considerate and kind). (48)

Dohawali verse no. 49:

तुलसी जाके होयगी अंतर बाहिर दीठि ।
सो कि कृपालुहि देइगो केवटपालहि पीठि ॥ 49 ॥

tulasī jākē hōyagī antara bāhira dīṭhi.
sō ki kṛpāluhi dē'igō kēvaṭapālahi pīṭhi. 49 .

Tulsidas wonders if a person—who understands the secret or the hidden reality of the 'Truth' that is concealed within one's bosom (in the form of the invisible, subtle and sublime entity known as the Atma or the soul that lives in the heart of all living beings as 'pure consciousness' and their true 'self') as well as is obvious in the external physical world (that is visible and has a physical gross form)—will or can ever be opposed to the merciful and kind Lord Ram who had allowed the boatman, known as Kewat, to wash his feet on the pretext of taking the Lord across the river on his boat? (49)

Dohawali verse no. 50:

प्रभु तरु तर कपि डार पर ते किए आपु समान ।

तुलसी कहूँ न राम से साहिब सील निधान ॥ 50 ॥

prabhu taru tara kapi ḍāra para tē ki'ē āpu samāna.
tulasī kahūṁ na rāma sē sāhiba sīla nidhāna. 50 .

The monkeys lived on the branches of trees whereas their Lord, Sri Ram, dwelt under them (i.e. under the branches of the trees). Nevertheless, not paying any attention to this violation of etiquette and decorum, Sri Ram made them one like himself (i.e. there was no distinction or formal hierarchy between them; the Lord ate, drunk and lived amidst them like they were his friends and brothers).

Tulsidas says no where else in this world will anyone find someone who is so humble, so courteous, so polite, so well-mannered, so tolerant, so loving, so considerate, so friendly, so amiable and so easily approachable as Lord Ram who is like a treasury of these magnificent noble virtues. (50)

Dohawali verse no. 51:

रे मन सब सों निरस ह्वै सरस राम सों होहि ।
भलो सिखावन देत है निसि दिन तुलसी तोहि ॥ 51 ॥

rē mana saba sō nīrasa hvai sarasa rāma sōṁ hōhi.
bhalō sikhāvana dēta hai nisi dina tulasī tōhi. 51 .

[Addressing the mind, Tulsidas motivates it to avoid thinking about the mortal world to which it has a natural inclination to move and get hooked, and instead focus its attention on Lord Ram because it will give the mind immense peace, bliss and happiness.]

‘Oh Mind! Tulsidas advises you day and night to detach yourself from all the products and material sense objects of this (deluding and entrapping) world, and instead attach yourself to Lord Ram (i.e. have devotion, affection, faith and longing for Sri Ram, and surrender yourself to the Lord).’ (51)

[Note—The world is selfish, and whatever benefits one seems to get by his attachment with the world is because he is of some use to the latter and serves some of its interests. As soon as he stops serving the vested interest of the world, the latter would start shunning him like he was some despicable creature. But Lord Ram is very kind, merciful and accepting; he is a friend of the downtrodden and the helpless; he will accept the person even when he is useless for the society. The only requirement the Lord needs is devotion, love and sincerity of surrender. He does not like deceit and cunning.]

Dohawali verse no. 52:

हरे चरहिं तापहिं बरे फरें पसारहिं हाथ ।
तुलसी स्वारथ मीत सब परमारथ रघुनाथ ॥ 52 ॥

harē carahim tāpahim barē pharēm pasārahim hātha.
tulasī svāratha mīta saba paramāratha raghunātha. 52 .

Tulsidas warns that this world is very selfish. When the trees and plants are green, the birds and animals graze or feed upon them; when they become old or withered and dried, people use them as firewood and burn them down; and when they bear fruits, people spread their hands to grab them (the fruits). All are friends while the going is good. But it is only Sri Ram who stays with us in both thick and thin (i.e. Sri Ram loves us always—whether we are happy or in distress, especially the latter). (52)

Dohawali verse no. 53:

स्वारथ सीता राम सों परमारथ सिय राम ।
तुलसी तेरो दूसरे द्वार कहा कहु काम ॥ 53 ॥

svāratha sītā rāma sōṁ paramāratha siya rāma.
tulasī tērō dūsarē dvāra kahā kahu kāma. 53.

Tulsidas addresses himself and his mind, saying—‘All the worldly interests as well as the spiritual interests will be taken care of by Sri Sitaram. Then say, why should and why would Tulsidas go and knock at the doors of others seeking favours?’ (53)

[Note—There is another way at interpreting this Doha—‘All the worldly interests and well-being (of Tulsidas) are taken care of by Lord Ram and his divine consort Sita. And the Lord is the only one who will take care of the spiritual needs of the soul of Tulsidas, the needs that go beyond this mundane and mortal existence. Oh Tulsidas! Say then, what is the need for you to go and beg at the door of others (i.e. the world as well as so many other gods and goddesses)?’

Tulsidas has invoked both Lord Ram and Sita here—the reason being that Lord Ram is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, and Sita is a manifestation of Laxmi, the divine consort of Vishnu and the patron goddess of wealth and material well-being. So Tulsidas says that when both of them are favourable to him it is rest assured that he cannot suffer from shortages of any material things in this world because of the grace of Sita, and his spiritual welfare will be taken care of by Lord Ram. So why should he worry?

Lord Ram has said himself that if anyone says that he is my devotee and subordinate and dependent upon me for everything, and then he goes seeking favours somewhere else, say then how can such a man honestly call himself my true devotee and follower, and how can he claim that he has faith and belief in me? Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46. It says “if one claims to be my (Lord Ram’s) devotee but expects something from others, or depends upon others, say then how can he so claim in the true sense?”]

Dohawali verse no. 54:

स्वारथ परमारथ सकल सुलभ एक ही ओर ।
द्वार दूसरे दीनता उचित न तुलसी तोर ॥ 54 ॥

svāratha paramāratha sakala sulabha ēka hī ōra.
dvāra dūsarē dīnatā ucita na tulasī tōra. 54 .

'Oh Tulsidas! When all your worldly desires and needs, as well as the final liberation and deliverance of your soul (emancipation and salvation of the Atma) can be achieved only at the one place (i.e. with Lord Ram), then it is not at all advisable and apt for you to beg at the doors of others (because that would not only prove that you are extremely stupid and greedy but would also be insulting for your beloved Lord who goes to any length to ensure your happiness, peace and welfare; it would be an outright betrayal).' (54)

Dohawali verse no. 55:

तुलसी स्वारथ राम हित परमारथ रघुबीर ।
सेवक जाके लखन से पवनपूत रनधीर ॥ 55 ॥

tulasī svāratha rāma hita paramāratha raghubīra.
sēvaka jākē lakhana sē pavanapūta ranadhīra. 55 .

For Tulsidas, all worldly self-interests (such as fulfillment of worldly desires and needs) as well as spiritual interests (such as emancipation and salvation of the soul) are served and met by Raghubir (Lord Ram, the Supreme Being who manifested as a brave warrior in the dynasty of king Raghu of Ayodhya) who was served by Laxman and the son of the Wind-God (i.e. Hanuman who was one of the greatest and most faithful devotee of Lord Ram). (55)

Dohawali verse no. 56:

ज्यों जग बैरी मीन को आपु सहित बिनु बारि ।
त्यो तुलसी रघुबीर बिनु गति आपनी बिचारि ॥ 56 ॥

jiyōm jaga bairī mīna kō āpu sahita binu bāri.
tyōm tulasī raghubīra binu gati āpanī bicāri. 56 .

The whole world, except the water, is like an enemy for the fish so much so that its own body acts like a foe (because it bites the fisherman's bait, gets caught, and subsequently killed). Similarly, Tulsidas tells himself, the same fate awaits you without Lord Ram (i.e. his own mind and sense organs would entangle him in the web of worldly attachments, delusions and temptations that would ultimately lead to his ruin if he does not strive to exercise control over them). (56)

[Note—In this Doha Tulsidas cites the example of a fish to emphasize the need to control one's sense organs as well as the natural tendencies of the mind to be attracted by the world and its material things. The fish knows very well that its best friend is the water, but still its greed makes it bite a fisherman's bait. This leads to the ultimate suffering and death of the fish. But it still does not refrain from biting the bait. Similarly, the mind and the senses force a creature to remain involved and entangled in the world because the latter seems to give a lot of pleasure and comfort to the body and the mind. But in the long run all this is detrimental for the spiritual well-being of the creature who gets trapped and sucked in the vortex of this whirlpool-like world of artificiality and delusions.]

Dohawali verse no. 57:

राम प्रेम बिनु दूबरो राम प्रेमहीं पीन ।
रघुबर कबहुँक करहुगे तुलसिहि ज्यों जल मीन ॥ 57 ॥

rāma prēma binu dūbarō rāma prēmahīm pīna.
raghubara kabahum̐ka karahugē tulasihī jyōm̐ jala mīna. 57 .

A fish¹ gets nourishment in water and remains healthy in it, but it becomes emaciated without it and dies if totally deprived of it. Similarly, Tulsidas wonders when shall he develop such profound degree of devotion, longing, love and affection for Raghubar (Sri Ram) that he would become emaciated without the Lord, and feel nourished (well-off, happy and contented) by having love and affection for the Lord. (57)

[Note—¹In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 68, stanza no. 5, the metaphor of the fish is used to emphasise the sort of love, devotion and dedication one should have for Lord Ram. This stanza says—“Oh Tulsidas! Just like a fish depends upon water, you (Tulsidas addresses himself) have only one succour and hope in the holy and divine name of Lord Ram in all the three phases of life representing your past (previous life), your present (life in this world), and your future (life after death).”]

Dohawali verse no. 58:

राम सनेही राम गति राम चरन रति जाहि ।
तुलसी फल जग जनम को दियो बिधाता ताहि ॥ 58 ॥

rāma sanēhī rāma gati rāma carana rati jāhi.
tulasī phala jaga janama kō diyō bidhātā tāhi. 58 .

Tulsidas says that a person who loves only Lord Ram, whose aim or goal in life is (the attainment of) Lord Ram, and who has devotion and affection only for the feet of Lord Ram—well, such a person is the fortunate one who has been selected by the creator for granting the real benefits or rewards of having taken birth in this world.

[That is, such a person is indeed most lucky and he enjoys the fruit of life by way of happiness, joys, bliss, contentedness, pleasures and comforts of all kinds, as well as good fame and a secured spiritual future in the form of liberation and deliverance of the soul.] (58)

Dohawali verse no. 59:

आपु आपने तें अधिक जेहि प्रिय सीताराम ।
तेहि के पग की पानहीं तुलसी तनु को चाम ॥ 59 ॥

āpu āpanē tēm̐ adhika jēhi priya sītārāma.
tēhi kē paga kī pānahīm̐ tulasī tanu kō cāma. 59.

Those who have greater love for Lord Ram than for any of the material things belonging to or related to them—Tulsidas says that such persons are so exalted and fortunate that even if he is beaten or even touched by the footwear of these people, he would consider himself very lucky and fortunate.

[Tulsidas means to say that such people who have undiluted and unflinching love and devotion of the purest kind and of the highest order for Lord Ram are indeed very fortunate and holy. They are true devotees of the Lord, and therefore worthy of the greatest respect and adoration. They become as holy as any other pilgrim site.] (59)

Dohawali verse no. 60:

स्वारथ परमारथ रहित सीता राम सनेहँ ।
तुलसी सो फल चारि को फल हमार मत एहँ ॥ 60 ॥

svāratha paramāratha rahita sītā rāma sanēham̐ .
tulasī sō phala cāri kō phala hamāra mata ēham̐ . 60 .

Tulsidas says that according to him having a selfless form of deep love and affection for Lord Ram, without expecting any worldly gains from it, or any hope of fulfilling one's objective in this world, or even expecting the salvation of the soul, is a greater (i.e. more important, richer and better) fruit than the acquisition of the four legendary rewards of doing auspicious deeds that come in the form of Artha (wealth), Dharma (righteousness), Kaam (desires fulfilled) and Moksha (emancipation and salvation of the soul). (60)

Dohawali verse no. 69:

राम दूरि माया बढ़ति घटति जानि मन माँह ।
भूरि होति रबि दूरि लखि सिर पर पगतर छाँह ॥ 69 ॥

rāma dūri māyā barḥati ghaṭati jāni mana māṁha.
bhūri hōti rabi dūri lakhi sira para pagatara chāṁha. 69 .

Like a shadow that is long when the sun is not overhead (and is at distance towards the horizon), and gets progressively shortened till the time it is underfoot as the sun moves closer towards the perpendicular till the time it is finally overhead of the observer, the delusions created by Maya¹ are inversely proportionate to one's nearness to or closeness with Lord Ram². (69)

[Note—¹Maya refers to the delusions created by this artificial world.]

Dohawali verse no. 84:

जैसो तैसो रावरो केवल कोसलपाल ।
तौ तुलसी को है भलो तिहूँ लोक तिहूँ काल ॥ 84 ॥

jaisō taisō rāvarō kēvala kōsalapāla.
tau tulasī kō hai bhalō tihūṁ lōka tihūṁ kāla. 84 .

Tulsidas addresses his Lord Ram and proclaims—'Oh Lord Ram, the king of Kaushal! Whether good or bad, this Tulsidas is yours. If this is the truth, then his welfare is assured in all the three worlds (the heaven, the hell, and the present world where he lives at present) and the three eras or phases of time (past, present and future).'

[Tulsidas is confident that once he has taken shelter in the holy feet of Lord Ram, his spiritual as well as temporal welfare and well-being is assured. He has nothing to worry about any longer.] (84)

Dohawali verse no. 85:

है तुलसी केँ एक गुन अवगुन निधि कहैं लोग ।
भलो भरोसो रावरो राम रीझिबे जोग ॥ 85 ॥

hai tulasī kēm ēka guna avaguna nidhi kahaiṁ lōga.
bhalō bharōsō rāvarō rāma rījhibē jōga. 85 .

Tulsidas addresses Lord Ram and says—'People say about me that I (Tulsidas) am a treasury (i.e. that I am full) of all the negative qualities, numerous faults and great shortcomings. But they do not know that I have one good quality—and it is that I have complete devotion, faith and confidence in you (Lord Ram). I have no other support, succour or reliance except you. Well then, oh Lord, this single quality should be enough to make you pleased with me and be satisfied with me (inspite of the world accusing me of being full of all the bad qualities that exist in this creation, or me lacking in any of the worthwhile virtues that are enumerated in the scriptures for a person to be eligible to get respect and honour as well as spiritual welfare in this world).'

Dohawali verse no. 87:

सत्य बचन मानस विमल कपट रहित करतूति ।
तुलसी रघुबर सेवकहि सकै न कलिजुग धूति ॥ 87 ॥

satya bacana mānasa vimala kapaṭa rahita karatūti.
tulasī raghubara sēvakahi sakai na kalijuga dhūti. 87 .

Tulsidas says that Kaliyug can't cheat and trap (i.e. entangle in delusions and falsehoods) those devotees of Sri Ram who speak the truth, whose mind is pure and incorrupt, and actions are honest and without deceit. (87)

[Note—The Kaliyug is the fourth of the four-epoch one cycle of creation and destruction. It is characterized by a predominance of all the negative traits one can

imagine of. It is deluding, entrapping and spiritually corrupting. The present era through which the world is passing is the Kaliyug.

One should sweetly speak the truth that is endorsed by the heart, i.e. the truth that is actually true and does not make a man feel guilty in the sub-conscious mind and heart.

One should have a simple and honest heart that harbours no deceit and cunning.

In the context of Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram and one of the Lord's greatest devotees who personified the virtue of sincere devotion, love and surrender for the Lord, it is said that he had purity in deeds, purity in words, and purity in the mind as well as in the heart.]

Dohawali verse no. 88:

तुलसी सुखी जो राम सों दुखी सो निज करतूति ।
करम बचन मन ठीक जेहि तेहि न सकै कलि धूति ॥ 88 ॥

tulasī sukhī jō rāma sōm dukhī sō nija karatūti.
karama bacana mana ṭhika jēhi tēhi na sakai kali dhūti. 88 .

Tulsidas says that Kaliyug can't cheat, trap, lead astray or delude those who are firmly convinced that their happiness and peace are directly dependent upon the benevolence, grace and mercy of Lord Ram, and if they are unhappy and restless then it is due to their own vanity, ego and haughtiness as well as their own evil deeds and misdemeanours, and those whose actions, words and mind as well as the heart are pure, pious, holy and righteous. (88)

[Note—People should realise that their happiness or unhappiness in this world lie in these qualities. They should not blame others or the destiny for their miseries, but their own selves. They must understand that one is happy in this world only when he takes refuge with the Supreme Lord, because then it is the responsibility of the Lord to take care of them and their needs. Otherwise, no one should expect to be happy and contented. One must be convinced that all his sufferings are due to the bad effects of his own evil deeds, and it is wrong to accuse either the destiny or the Lord for his miseries; they are his own making.

The same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 291 in which sage Vashistha tells Lord Ram—“That comfort and happiness, that deed and ritual, and that Dharma (duty and religious observance) in which there is no devotion for Lord Ram and which does not arouse love and submission for Lord Ram's lotus like feet—let all them be burnt down. Any union should be regarded as sorrowful and bad, any knowledge should be deemed to be as useless as ignorance—if they do have love for Lord Ram as the main component. If anyone is happy it is because of you, or because of your company, or because you reside in his heart, or because you are pleased with him, and if anyone is unhappy it is because of the opposite circumstances than these.”]

Dohawali verse no. 103:

जायँ कहब करतूति बिनु जायँ जोग बिन छेम ।
तुलसी जायँ उपाय सब बिना राम पद प्रेम ॥ 103 ॥

jāyam̐ kahaba karatūti binu jāyam̐ jōga bina chēma.
tulasī jāyam̐ upāya saba binā rāma pada prēma. 103 .

Giving sermons, lectures and discourses to others and preaching them without undertaking corresponding actions personally to support what one teaches others, and setting of personal example relevant to such teachings are useless and merely bombast. [That is, one must practice what one preaches. There should be coordination between precepts and practice. Words and deeds must coincide.]

Similarly, acquiring success in attaining difficult objectives and acquisition of unobtainable rare objects or things without being capable of protecting those that are already in possession or being able to ensure that the new acquisition is safely kept is a worthless exercise. [Refer: Doha no. 104.]

Tulsidas says that likewise, all ways and means that lead to one's ultimate spiritual welfare are in vain and useless without having faith and devotion in the holy feet of Lord Ram.

[That is, having love and devotion for Lord Ram and complete submission in the Lord's holy feet is the core value to all spiritual exercises. Just like nothing can stand without the earth to act as the ground, no building can stand if there is no foundation, no body can live without the soul, and there can be no golden ornament without gold, it is also simply not possible to succeed in any spiritual practice or attain the desired fruit of any religious activity if one does not have steady, sincere and robust faith and devotion in the Supreme Lord, Lord Ram.] (103)

[Note—Refer: The Holy Bible, St. Mathew, 22/36-37. It says—“When Jesus was asked: ‘Lord, which is the greatest commandment in the law?’, He replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and the greatest commandment.’”

Then again in 1 Corinthians, 13/13, St. Paul says—“And now abides hope, faith and love, but the greatest of these is love”.]

Dohawali verse no. 104:

लोग मगन सब जोगहीं जोग जायँ बिनु छेम ।
त्योँ तुलसीके भावगत राम प्रेम बिनु नेम ॥ 104 ॥

lōga magana saba jōgahīm̐ jōga jāyam̐ binu chēma.
tyōm̐ tulasīkē bhāvagata rāma prēma binu nēma..

All the people are totally absorbed or obsessed in acquisition of difficult and rare-to-find things, but it is in vain without first being able to properly maintain and protect that which is already possessed. According to Tulsidas, all spiritual ways and means are similarly useless without having faith and devotion for Lord Ram. (104)

Dohawali verse no. 126:

बारि मथें घृत होइ बरु सिकता ते बरु तेल ।
बिनु हरि भजन न भव तरिअ यह सिद्धान्त अपेल ॥ 126 ॥

bāri mathēm ghr̥ṭa hō'i baru sikatā tē baru tēla.
binu hari bhajana na bhava tari'a yaha sid'dhānta apēla. 126 .

Butter may be produced by churning water or oil may be extracted from sand, but it is an infallible and inviolable rule that it is impossible to cross the ocean of worldly existence without having faith in, devotion for and submission to Lord Ram. (126)

[Note—This Doha highlights the fact that even if the most improbable of things is made possible, like extracting oil from sand or butter produced by churning of water, still it is impossible to find deliverance from this entrapping world without having love and devotion for Lord Ram.]

Dohawali verse no. 127:

हरि माया कृत दोष गुन बिनु हरि भजन न जाहिं ।
भजिअ राम सब काम तजि अस बिचारि मन माहिं ॥ 127 ॥

hari mājā kr̥ṭa dōṣa guna binu hari bhajana na jāhim.
bhaji'a rāma saba kāma taji asa bicāri mana māhim. 127 .

The illusion of something being good and something being bad in this world is a delusion created by Maya of Lord Hari (Vishnu). It can only be eliminated by invoking the Lord's mercy and grace, which in turn is possible only when one has devotion and faith in the Lord. A wise man should understand this and abandon all sorts of desires and wants, and instead develop deep and abiding devotion and faith in Lord Ram. (127)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 104 'Ka' of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand.

An exactly the same idea is expressed in Doha no. 41 of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand. It says that all notions of one thing being good and the other bad is caused by delusions of duality in this world. A wise man does not pay attention to it because such differences are limited to the grosser aspect of this mundane world, but the subtler world of the pure consciousness known as the world of the Atma is free from such delusions.

Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 119 stress that by having Bhakti (devotion, dedication, faith and love) for Lord Ram, the delusion created by this mortal mundane world consisting of the cycle of birth and death is removed very easily without having to make a lot of spiritual efforts just like the case when one eats food for one's satisfaction and taste but the fire burning inside the abdomen automatically digests the food even if one does not expressly ignite this fire.]

Dohawali verse no. 134:

अस बिचारि मतिधीर तजि कुतर्क संसय सकल ।
भजहु राम रघुबीर करुनाकर सुंदर सुखद ॥ 134 ॥

asa bicāri matidhīra taji kutarka sansaya sakala.
bhajahu rāma raghubīra karunākara sundara sukhada. 134.

Hence, Tulsidas advises the Jiva that he must take into consideration all that has been said by wise ones, and be of a stable mind and abandon all doubts, unnecessary logics and arguments that would lead to confusions that would only create more perplexities for him instead of solving any issue.

Thus, he must abandon all deceit, doubts and debates, and instead worship Lord Ram—who is a mine of mercy and compassion, has a most beautiful and divine form, and who is a bestower of supreme bliss—with full faith and devotion. (134)

Dohawali verse no. 135:

भाव बस्य भगवान सुख निधान करुना भवन ।
तजि ममता मद मान भजिअ सदा सीता खन ॥ 135 ॥

bhāva basya bhagavāna sukha nidhāna karunā bhavana.
taji mamatā mada māna bhaji'a sadā sītā ravana. 135 .

The Lord ('Bhagwan'), who is a treasury of happiness and abode of compassion and mercy (i.e. the Lord who abounds in happiness himself and provides unlimited happiness, compassion and mercy to his devotees and followers), can be controlled (i.e. influenced, affected, whose attention can be drawn) only by having the emotions of love and devotion for him. Therefore, one should abandon all sorts of worldly attachments and infatuations ('Mamta'), ego, pride, arrogance and vanity ('Mada and Maan') (which act as hindrances in obtaining nearness with the Lord), and instead always worship Lord Ram with the greatest of faith and devotion along with humility and sincerity. (135)

Dohawali verse no. 136:

कहहिं बिमलमति संत बेद पुरान बिचारि अस ।
द्रवहिं जानकी कंत तब छूटै संसार दुख ॥ 136 ॥

kahahim bimalamati santa bēda purāna bicāri asa.
dravahim jānakī kanta taba chūṭai sansāra dukha. 136 .

Saints and seers who are wise and have an uncorrupt mind (i.e. a mind that is not influenced by worldly considerations) give the following advice, after having consulted the Vedas and the Purans—that a person can get rid of the sorrows of the world only when Lord Ram, the dear husband of Janki (Sita), feels pity for him, and develops sympathy and compassion for him. (136)

Dohawali verse no. 137:

बिनु गुर होइ कि ग्यान ग्यान कि होइ बिराग बिनु ।

गावहिं बेद पुरान सुख कि लहिअ हरि भगति बिनु ॥ 137 ॥

binu gura hō'i ki gyāna gyāna ki hō'i birāga binu.
gāvahim bēda purāna sukha ki lahi'a hari bhagati binu. 137 .

Is it ever possible to attain spiritual wisdom without (the help and guidance of) a Guru (i.e. a wise teacher), and similarly is it ever possible to have such wisdom without inculcating the eclectic virtue of renunciation and detachment from this world of material sense objects as well as all its attachments, relationships, allurements and temptations (i.e. without inculcating and practicing the virtue of 'Vairagya')? [That is, it is not possible that either can happen.]

The Vedas and the Purans assert that likewise it is not possible to have true peace, comfort and happiness without having 'Bhakti' (devotion, dedication, love and faith) in Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, whose incarnation was Lord Ram). (137)

Dohawali verse no. 138:

रामचंद्र के भजन बिनु जो चह पद निर्बान ।
ग्यानवंत अपि सो नर पसु बिनु पूँछ बिषान ॥ 138 ॥

rāmacandra kē bhajana binu jō caha pada nirbāna.
gyānavanta api sō nara pasu binu pūṁcha biṣāna. 138 .

A person who, inspite of being learned, expects emancipation and salvation of the soul without worshipping and paying homage to Lord Ram is like an animal without a horn or tail (i.e. he has a deformed mind and corrupted intellect which has anomalous and erroneous thoughts that are in breach of the law of Nature and the well established principles of the ancient scriptures).

[Even as an animal would look unconventional, odd and deformed if it does not have the characteristic features of an ordinary animal, such as having a tail or a horn, a person who has no devotion for Lord Ram and expects his emancipation and salvation is an odd person, an aberration, because his thoughts and expectations are against conventional wisdom and impossible to achieve.] (138)

Dohawali verse no. 139:

जरउ सो संपति सदन सुखु सुहृद मातु पितु भाइ ।
सनमुख होत जो रामपद करइ न सहस सहाइ ॥ 139 ॥

jara'u sō sampati sadana sukhu suhrda mātu pitu bhā'i.
sanamukha hōta jō rāmapada kara'i na sahasa sahā'i. 139 .

Such good fortunes as worldly riches, a full and contented home, happiness and joys, friends and compatriots, as well as parents and brothers etc. that do not naturally,

cheerfully and willingly aid and inspire a person to turn towards Lord Ram's holy feet should perish.

[Tulsidas says that the main objective of a man's life should be to have devotion for Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, because this is the only means of finding eternal and true spiritual peace, rest, happiness and comfort in this world. The semblance of happiness and joy that one thinks one gets in this world due to various acquisitions and contacts are as temporary and unsustainable as the world itself. Therefore, a wise man is one who endeavours to develop sincere faith and devotion for the Lord, and if any of the components of the world creates any hindrance in it then he is advised to abandon it completely for his own sake.] (139)

Dohawali verse no. 140:

सेइ साधु गुरु समुझि सिखि राम भगति थिरताइ ।
लरिकाई को पैरिबो तुलसी बिसरि न जाइ ॥ 140 ॥

sē'i sādhu guru samujhi sikhi rāma bhagati thiratā'i.
larikā'ī kō pairibō tulasī bisari na jā'i. 140 .

Tulsidas gives this wise advice—"Understand and learn the essence (i.e. become enlightened about the fundamental truth of the divine form and nature) of Lord Ram from true saints and wise teachers. Observe how they have developed devotion for the Lord and how they lead their lives. Listen to them attentively and learn from what they teach. It is only then that one can expect to have stable and unwavering faith for and devotion towards the Lord, because one who learns how to swim during his childhood days never forgets it in life later on." (140)

Dohawali verse no. 141:

सबइ कहावत राम के सबहि राम की आस ।
राम कहहिं जेहि आपनो तेहि भजु तुलसीदास ॥ 141 ॥

saba'i kahāvata rāma kē sabahi rāma kī āsa.
rāma kahahim jēhi āpanō tēhi bhaju tulasīdāsa. 141 .

'All people pride themselves as being devotees of Lord Sri Ram and all say that they have hope from Lord Sri Ram alone. But, oh Tulsidas, you should instead adore and follow only those people whom Lord Sri Ram himself recognises as his devotee and follower.' (141)

[Note—The question arises now as to who is the Lord's true devotee? The Lord has himself outlined the virtues and characters of his true devotee in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 86, to Doha no. 87 Ka.

Briefly they can be summarized as follows—"All the creatures in this world have been created by me (the Supreme Being known as Ram). I love them equally as all of them are my off-springs. Out of them, I love the humans more. Out of them, I prefer Dwij (Brahmins); out of them I prefer those who are well versed in the Vedas; out of

such Brahmins I prefer those who actually follow the teachings of the Vedas (instead of just muttering their hymns and incantations); out of such Brahmins I prefer those who have developed Vairagya or renunciation and dispassion; out of them I prefer those who have gained ‘Gyan’ (knowledge of spiritual matters and having wisdom); out of such people I prefer those who have ‘Vigyan’ (an in-depth clinical knowledge of spiritual matters, leading to self-realisation and enlightenment); and out of them I prefer those who are my ardent followers and are totally dependent upon me, for whom I am the only destination and refuge, the only source of succour and solace, and the only source of help and happiness. Even Brahma, the creator, is equal to an ordinary being for me if he has no Bhakti (devotion and dedication), while the humblest and lowly of all the creatures is dearest to me and closest to my heart if he has Bhakti in him. A father has many sons, but he is more inclined to favour the one who is totally devoted to his father. Similarly, I (Lord Ram) have equal mercy and grace for all living beings, but it is natural for me to love those who love me and have devotion for me.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35, to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36, Lord Ram has described the ‘nine forms of Bhakti’ to Sabari, the low-caste woman devotee of the Lord. Now let us briefly see what the Lord says are the nine forms of Bhakti.

“A man lacking in devotion is as worthless as a cloud without rain. Now I shall enumerate the nine types of Bhakti that pleases me; listen carefully and cherish them in your heart and mind. (1) The first is having fellowship and communion with pious saints and holy men; (2) the second is to have liking for and eagerness to hear divine stories and episodes related to my life and deeds; (3) the third form is to humbly serve the holy lotus-feet of one’s Guru (moral preceptor and spiritual teacher); (4) the fourth form is to sing and emotionally submerge one’s self in my divine glories and virtues; (5) the fifth form of devotion is to constantly and persistently repeat and remain engrossed and submerged in my holy and divine name, and have unflinching and steady faith and conviction in it’s glory and divinity as revealed in the Vedas; (6) the sixth form is to have self restraint and inculcate noble and auspicious virtues such as humility, politeness, dignified existence, observing etiquette and social norms, to abstain from indulgences and remaining engrossed in multifarious worldly pursuits, and to diligently and honestly follow the righteous and noble path shown by and fit for saints and sages who are wise, erudite, enlightened and sagacious; (7) the next form of Bhakti, the seventh, is to see the whole creation as my image (i.e. to believe in the philosophy of non-duality), and treats saints and sages as more honourable and revered than me; (8) the eighth form of Bhakti is to be perpetually satisfied and contented with whatever one has got and never yearn for more, as well as to never find faults with others; and (9) finally the ninth form is to be simple hearted without any deception and fraud, without any deceit and imposturing, to be straightforward in one’s dealings with all others, to have unwavering and unflinching faith, conviction and reliance upon me (and on no body else), and not to feel either exulted or depressed (under favourable or unfavourable circumstances, because he has reliance upon me and treats the good and bad happenings in the world with equanimity as affect the body which lives in the world and is affected by circumstances, and not the ‘true self’ which is the pure conscious Atma).”]

Dohawali verse no. 142:

जेहि सरीर रति राम सों सोइ आदरहिं सुजान ।
रुद्रदेह तजि नेहबस बनर भे हनुमान ॥ 142 ॥

jēhi sarīra rati rāma sōm sō'i ādarahim sujāna.
rudradēha taji nēhabasa bānara bhē hanumāna. 142 .

Those who are clever respect the body through which their 'self' (i.e. their soul) can have devotion for (i.e. be able to serve) Lord Sri Ram. This is the reason why Hanuman had abandoned his Rudra-form (one of the 11 divine forms of Lord Shiva) in favour of the body of a monkey (because he could serve Lord Ram this way). (142)

Dohawali verse no. 143:

जानि राम सेवा सरस समुझि करब अनुमान ।
पुरुषा ते सेवक भए हर ते भे हनुमान ॥ 143 ॥

jāni rāma sēvā sarasa samujhi karaba anumāna.
puruṣā tē sēvaka bha'e hara tē bhē hanumāna. 143 .

Realising that there was supreme pleasure in the service of Lord Sri Ram, even the ancestor of this creation (i.e. Brahma, the first of the Trinity Gods as well as the creator and the old patriarch of this visible world) and Har (i.e. Lord Shiva, the third of the Trinity Gods and the concluder of creation) chose to become Jamvant (the old bear) and Hanuman (the monkey devotee) respectively.

Tulsidas says that one must understand the meaning of this event and the secret behind it (that even such exalted Gods as Brahma and Shiva decided to assume such lowly forms as that of a bear and a monkey just so that they can get a chance to closely serve the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram). This shows the profound spiritual importance and the stupendous nature of the bliss and satisfaction that one derives by loving and serving the Lord. (143)

[Note—This Doha lays stress to the importance of serving the Lord in any way whatsoever one can, even if that means stepping down from one's exalted position, and appearing to be doing something lowly and incompatible to one's standing in the world. Brahma and Shiva are the two superior Gods in this creation, superior to all other Gods in the pantheon. Even they did not want to lose the chance of serving the Supreme Being, and therefore did not hesitate to become a bear and a monkey if that helped them to serve the Lord. The reason was that the Lord had to assume a human form to kill the evil demons led by their king Ravana, and this demon had done severe Tapa (penance) to achieve a boon that provided him a funny indemnity from death from all in this world, including the powerful Gods, except that if he could be killed it would be only by a human, and if anyone could oppose him or stand against him then it could be a monkey and a bear. At the time of seeking immunity from death, the creator had told him that it is impossible to become immortal with a physical body because everything that is born must die. This is the sacrosanct law of Nature which cannot be violated, for even Brahma, who had created the world, would die when his time comes. So Ravana thought to be clever and attempted to circumvent this law by excluding humans and animals such as monkeys and bears from being able to harm and kill him, because he thought that when even the Gods would be under his command and captured by him, what can the lowly and impotent man or his more predecessor the monkey and bear do to him. This is the single loophole which the Supreme Being had to exploit in order to kill him and free the earth from his nuisance.

This is why all the Gods, including Brahma and Shiva, assumed the form of different monkeys and bears in order to help the Lord, Lord Vishnu, who had himself assumed the form of a human as Lord Ram, to kill the fierce demons.

Besides this aim, the two senior Gods saw in this an opportunity to serve the Supreme Being from close quarters in a physical form, something they could obviously not do in their primary cosmic form which has no physical body.

By doing this they had also set an example for all other living beings, the creatures of this world who are known as the Jiva, and subtly conveyed the message to them that the primary aim of all living beings should be to serve the Lord with the greatest of devotion and sincerity, and no ego or pretensions of seniority should come in the way—for Brahma and Shiva are the two most senior Gods in this creation, and even they had no second thoughts to become a bear and a monkey to serve the Lord.]

Dohawali verse no. 144:

तुलसी रघुबर सेवकहि खल डाटत मन माखि ।
बाजराज के बालकहि लवा दिखावत आँखि ॥ 144 ॥

tulasī raghubara sēvakahi khala ḍāṭata mana mākhī.
bājarāja kē bālakahī lavā dikhāvata āṁkhī. 144 .

Tulsidas says that miscreants angrily scold the devotees of Lord Sri Ram in the same manner as the bird quail/pheasant looks menacingly at an young chick of an eagle (out of jealousy, but is unable to harm it—because if it even attempts to do so, the eagle would immediately kill the quail/pheasant). (144)

Dohawali verse no. 145:

रावन रिपुके दास तें कायर करहिं कुचालि ।
खर दूषन मारीच ज्यों नीच जाहिंगे कालि ॥ 145 ॥

rāvana ripukē dāsa tēm kāyara karahīm kucālī.
khara dūṣana mārīca jyōm nīca jāhiṅgē kāli. 145 .

Only crooks and cowards think of creating mischief for the devotee of Lord Ram who had conquered even Ravana (the invincible demon king of Lanka, who was the most wicked and the most crooked creature in existence at the time)¹. Those crooks will soon depart from this world (i.e. they will be severely punished) as were Khar and Dushan (the two demons who were killed by Lord Ram)².

[This is because by tormenting Sri Ram's devotee, the wicked people antagonise Lord Sri Ram himself, which in turn would result in their elimination. The Lord does not tolerate that his devotees be subjected to any kind of pain and suffering due to mischief created by pervert creatures.] (145)

Dohawali verse no. 146:

पुन्य पाप जस अजस के भावी भाजन भूरि ।
संकट तुलसीदास को राम करहिंगे दूरि ॥ 146 ॥

pun'ya pāpa jasa ajasa kē bhāvī bhājana bhūri.
saṅkaṭa tulasīdāsa kō rāma karahiṅgē dūri. 146 .

Tulsidas says that it is certain that his troubles and distresses would surely be eliminated by Lord Sri Ram. Of course, those who have helped him or had opposed him shall enjoy or suffer from relevant consequences in the shape of good name (glory) or bad name (ignominy) respectively.

[That is, the devotee of Lord Ram is sure to find happiness and peace as well as redemption from all miseries. In this process it does not matter to him whether anyone is helpful or act as an obstacle, for none of them can change the course of the devotee's destiny which is secured in the hands of Lord Ram. But those who help the devotee in his life get the bonus of good name and fame as good people who had helped the Lord's devotee, an act that is regarded as righteous, auspicious and holy. On the contrary, those who are jealous of the devotee and try to create hurdles for him or torment him are sure to be punished by the Lord for their mischief. Such latter persons get infamy as being unrighteous villains and mischievous crooks.] (146)

Dohawali verse no. 147:

खेलत बालक ब्याल सँग मेलत पावक हाथ ।
तुलसी सिसु पितु मातु ज्यों राखत सिय रघुनाथ ॥ 147 ॥

khēlata bālaka byāla samṅa mēlata pāvaka hātha.
tulasī sisu pitu mātu jyōm rākhata siya raghunātha. 147.

Even as a child is stopped by its parents while trying to play with a snake or putting a hand in fire, so does the parent-like Lord Sri Ram prevent the child-like innocent Tulsidas when he goes towards (i.e. is attracted by) the poisonous snake-like delusions or the fire-like delusions created by attractions and temptations of the material world of sense objects. (147)

Dohawali verse no. 148:

तुलसी दिन भल साहु कहँ भली चोर कहँ राति ।
निसि बासर ता कहँ भलो मानै राम इताति ॥ 148 ॥

tulasī dina bhala sāhu kaham' bhalī cōra kaham' rāti.
nisi bāsara tā kaham' bhalō mānai rāma itāti. 148 .

Tulsidas says a thief prefers the night while an honest man prefers day light, but for those who obey Sri Ram (i.e. follow his path of righteousness, auspiciousness, holiness, morality, ethics, probity and propriety etc.) both the day and the night are

equally auspicious. [To wit, these are the characters of a true devotee of the Lord.] (148)

Dohawali verse no. 152:

सूधे मन सूधे बचन सूधी सब करतूति ।
तुलसी सूधी सकल बिधि रघुबर प्रेम प्रसूति ॥ 152 ॥

sūdhē mana sūdhē bacana sūdhī saba karatūti.
tulasī sūdhī sakala bidhi raghubara prēma prasūti. 152 .

Those who are simple, straightforward, uncorrupt and unpretentious in their heart, in their mind, in their speech and in their action (i.e. those who do not have any deceit and conceit of any kind whatsoever), for them all means by which love and devotion for Lord Raghubar (Lord Ram) can be ignited become extremely simple and easily available.

[That is, the best way to develop devotion and love for the Lord is to have the eclectic virtues mentioned in this Doha—to be of a simple heart, to be humble in demeanours, to be free from all corruptions that may taint the mind, to speak sweet and pleasant words of truth, and to do things that are deemed to be righteous, auspicious, noble and proper. One should discard all negativities so characteristic of this material world of delusions, and instead inculcate good virtues and noble qualities.] (152)

Dohawali verse no. 156:

जाति हीन अघ जन्म महि मुक्त कीन्हि असि नारि ।
महामंद मन सुख चहसि ऐसे प्रभुहि बिसारि ॥ 156 ॥

jāti hīna agha janma mahi mukta kīnhi asi nāri.
mahāmanda mana sukha cahasi aisē prabhuhi bisāri. 156 .

Tulsidas says—‘Even a low-born woman named Sabari who was devoid of any merit was granted liberation and deliverance by the grace of Lord Sri Ram. Oh you foolish mind! Do you ever hope to get happiness and peace by forgetting such a benevolent Lord as Sri Ram?’ (156)

Dohawali verse no. 157:

बंधु बधू रत कहि कियो बचन निरुत्तर बालि ।
तुलसी प्रभु सुग्रीव की चितइ न कछू कुचालि ॥ 157 ॥

bandhu badhū rata kahi kiyō bacana niruttara bāli.
tulasī prabhu sugrīva kī cita'i na kachū kucāli. 157 .

Lord Sri Ram made Baali speechless when the former accused the latter of being enamoured by his younger brother's (Sugriv's) wife and keeping her as his mistress, but Tulsidas says that the benevolent Lord did not pay any heed to a similar misdeed of Sugriv who was his faithful and loyal servant (i.e. devotee and follower). (157)

Dohawali verse no. 171:

कृपिन देइ पाइअ परो बिनु साधें सिधि होइ ।
सीतापति सनमुख समुझि जो कीजै सुभ सोइ ॥ 171 ॥

kṛpana dē'i pā'i'a parō binu sādheṁ sidhi hō'i.
sītāpati sanamukha samujhi jō kījai subha sō'i. 171 .

A miser gives (against his natural inclination to hoard instead of give and share), something useful is found unexpected (due to a stroke of good luck), and great mystical powers are acquired and successes achieved (without the least effort)—in other words, the most impossible and unexpected things can happen if one depends on the Lord of Sita (i.e. on Lord Sri Ram). (171)

Dohawali verse no. 172:

दंडक बन पावन करन चरन सरोज प्रभाउ ।
ऊसर जामहिं खल तरहिं होइ रंक ते राउ ॥ 172 ॥

daṇḍaka bana pāvana karana carana sarōja prabhā'u.
ūsara jāmahim khala tarahim hō'i raṅka tē rā'u. 172 .

By the grace of the holy feet of Lord Sri Ram—which had converted the inhabitable Dandak forest from being cursed to being one that was blessed and holy (i.e. from being harsh, inhospitable and riddled with fierce blood seeking demons and cruel animals, into a verdant green forest rich in pleasant flora and fauna)—even infertile land can yield crops, miscreants and rascals can be liberated (i.e. provided freedom from the burden of their accumulated sins and their horrible consequences), and a pauper (i.e. a penniless destitute) can become a king. (172)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 16-17 that precede Doha no. 13, we read that sage Agastya, also known as Kumbhaj, has requested Lord Ram to go to the Dandak forest and make it free from the horrible curse cast upon it by a sage (Sukracharya), bless the sages who reside there doing severe penances and austerities, and spend some time himself living there to make the place holy and divine by the Lord's presence.

Initially, the *Dandak forest* was a verdant green forest with a rich repository of pleasant trees and docile animals. It was burnt by a curse of Sukracharya, the Guru of the demon race. It then turned into a most inhospitable terrain, full of ferocious demons and cruel animals. When Lord Ram visited the place during his wanderings and put his holy feet on its soil, the curse was removed and the forest regained its original glory. It was in this forest that the Lord met the vulture king Jatayu (Ram

Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 13), and had killed the demons Khar, Dushan, Trishira and their 14 thousand companions (Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18, to Doha no. 20).

Refer: Vinai Patrika, verse no. 257, line nos. 6-7 which say that the forest of Dandak, which was barren with burnt out trees and full of thorns, was converted into a verdant forest full of flower and fruit bearing trees as soon as Lord Ram put his holy feet on its floor.

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 14 it is narrated how the Dandak forest was transformed—“Ever since Lord Ram came to live in this forest, the sages, hermits and seers who lived there became happy and all their torments ended. The hills, the forest, the rivers, the ponds and lakes in this forest began to look charming and beautiful; they were delightful to behold. Their magnificence and beauty changed and appeared to improve every passing day; each new day made them appear more beautiful and enthralling than the previous day. The hordes and flocks of animals and birds that populated this forest lived happily and joyously, without any worry in the world. The forest reverberated with the humming of the black bee. Even the king of serpents, Lord Seshnath, is unable to describe the pleasant environs of the forest where Lord Ram, the Lord of the universe, himself resides.”]

Dohawali verse no. 173:

बिनहीं रितु तरुबर फरत सिला द्रवति जल जोर ।
राम लखन सिय करि कृपा जब चितवत जेहि ओर ॥ 173 ॥

binahīm ritu tarubara pharata silā dravati jala jōra.
rāma lakhana siya kari kṛpā jaba citavata jēhi ōra. 173 .

When the Trinity consisting of Lord Sri Ram himself, his brother Laxman and the Lord's divine consort Sita become benevolent, favourable and benign, then even trees bear fruits without proper season and water sprouts from stones (i.e. events which are unnatural and un-imaginable become possible).

[In other words, when the Lord becomes pleased with someone, nothing remains beyond his reach; everything is accessible and possible by the grace of the Lord. Hence, a wise man is he who makes effort to please the Lord of the world and become eligible to have the Lord's blessings and grace. This will ensure the devotee's all-round welfare: both at the temporal level as well as the spiritual level.] (173)

Dohawali verse no. 174:

सिला सुतिय भइ गिरि तरे मृतक जिए जग जान ।
राम अनुग्रह सगुन सुभ सुलभ सकल कल्यान ॥ 174 ॥

silā sutiya bha'i giri tarē mṛṭaka ji'ē jaga jāna.
rāma anugraha saguna subha sulabha sakala kalyāna. 174.

The whole world knows that by the grace of Lord Ram the rock became a beautiful lady [this incident refers to the story of Ahilya who had turned into a stone by her husband's curse but was restored to herself by the dust of Sri Ram's feet]¹, boulders floated on the ocean [this refers to the construction of the bridge across the ocean by which the Lord's army had crossed over to Lanka before the start of the epic Ram-Ravana war]², and the bears and monkeys who were killed in the war were all revived back to life [this refers to the rain of Amrit, the elixir of life, that was poured on battle-field by Indra, the king of Gods, on the instructions of Lord Ram at the end of the war, which resulted in the monkeys who were either dead or mortally wounded coming back to life and becoming healthy once again]³.

Tulsidas says that likewise, by the grace of Sri Ram, one can get all good virtues and auspiciousness quite easily. (174)

Dohawali verse no. 175:

सिला साप मोचन चरन सुमिरहु तुलसीदास ।
तजहु सोच संकट मिटिहिं पूजहि मनकी आस ॥ 175 ॥

silā sāpa mōcana carana sumirahu tulasīdāsa.
tajahu sōca saṅkaṭa miṭihim pūjahi manakī āsa..

Tulsidas says that one should remember the holy feet of Lord Sri Ram, which had liberated Ahilya (in the form of a stone) from her curse, and thereby become free from all sorts of worries. By thus remembering Sri Ram continuously, all worries and troubles would be eliminated, and all desires fulfilled. (175)

Dohawali verse no. 176:

मुए जिआए भालु कपि अवध बिप्रको पूत ।
सुमिरहु तुलसी ताहि तू जाको मारुति दूत ॥ 176 ॥

mu'ē ji'ā'ē bhālu kapi avadha biprakō pūta.
sumirahu tulasī tāhi tū jākō māruti dūta. 176 .

Tulsidas addresses himself and says—‘Oh Tulsidas, you must always remember the benevolent Lord who had revived the dead bears and monkeys after the war ended in Lanka¹, and who had also brought back to life a Brahmin's dead son at Ayodhya².

You (i.e. Tulsidas) must remember such a Lord (Sri Ram) whose messenger is Hanuman, the son of the Wind-God.’

[Hanuman had revived Laxman in the battle-field by bringing the Sanjivani herb from the Himalayas. Hanuman was the most able and brave aide of Lord Ram. So, Tulsidas means here that if a person has firm faith in Lord Ram, and if due to any past bad deeds of that person he is subjected to some unavoidable suffering, then Lord Ram would intervene and find out some way to provide succour to the suffering devotee. The Lord will not let him die due to his suffering. Surely the Lord will send his trusted aide, Hanuman, to take care of his devotee and fight off evil forces that had

been the cause of the devotee's sufferings. Hanuman's bringing the herb to revive Laxman in the battle-field is an allusion to this principle. It is an allegory to emphasise that even if the worst comes to happen, Lord Ram's devotee need not worry.] (176)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 113 and Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that follow it. It so happened that at the end of the war, all the Gods had assembled to pay their obeisance to Lord Ram and thank him for eliminating the cruel demons. The king of gods, Indra, prayed to Lord Ram and asked him what he could do for the Lord. Lord Ram ordered him to rain Amrit (nectar of life) on the battle field so that the monkeys and bears who had laid down their lives in the service of the Lord could be revived. So, Indra showered rain in the form of Amrit. This rain revived the monkeys and bears but not the demons.

It seems a partisan attitude for the Lord to have revived only the monkeys and bears, and not the demons. But the reason is that the Lord had his reservations: he was apprehensive that after their revival, the demons could revert to their old evil ways, and then all the trouble taken to eliminate this evil from the world would be nullified in one stroke. Of course, this would never be a wise action. So the Lord tweaked the things in such a way that only the monkeys and the bears were revived when Amrit rained down upon the battle-field.

But at the same time, Lord Ram is the neutral and benevolent Lord God of creation and the world. For him, all Jivas (living beings) are equal. He punishes some and excuses others not because he is biased against anyone but because he has to maintain order and law in his creation, and for this it is absolutely that the guilty, the sinful and the evil Jivas must be duly punished for their misdeeds. It is because while being equal to all and remaining above prejudices and bias, the Lord also has a great responsibility that the innocent, the helpless and the weak creatures in his kingdom are not subjected to terror by the powerful and strong.

So therefore, he had to punish the demons for their misdeeds and sins, but the Lord also ensured that after death the souls of all the demons would get deliverance. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 114.

²The full story of how Lord Ram helped the Brahmin's dead son being revived to life has been described in the Anand Ramayan, Rajya Kand, Purvaardha, verse nos. 50 to 120.

Briefly it is as follows—Once a Brahmin's five year old son died. Both the parents came to the palace gates of Lord Ram, grieving and wailing. When the Lord asked them the reason they replied that some sort of wrong activities are going on in his kingdom, and since a king is responsible for everything that happens in his kingdom, the Lord cannot absolve himself from the negative consequences of such acts. When the king is marred by the taint of sin, the subjects suffer by way of premature death, diseases, natural calamities etc. Now therefore, since the son has died due to the king's share of sins, if the Lord does not do anything to revive the dead son, the parents threatened to die also, and then the Lord Ram would be squarely responsible for the horrendous consequences.

The Lord assured the Brahmin that he would ensure that the dead son is revived, but till that time his dead body was put in a tub of oil to prevent decomposition. He even assured the Brahmin parents that if he is unable to revive the dead son then he will offer his own two sons, Lav and Kush to them as compensation.

Lord Ram consulted his Guru Vashistha, and on his advice he mounted on the Pushpak plane to survey his kingdom and find out where any wrong is being done. During the inspection he was confronted with six more dead persons who had died before ripe age. One was a husband whose wife was wailing inconsolably, the second was the dead body of a Kshatriya living in a village called Madhupur, the third was that of a prostitute living in Prayag (Triveni; Allahabad), the fourth was that of an oil

merchant from Hastinapur, the fifth was that of a daughter-in-law of an ironsmith of Haridwar, and the sixth was that of a daughter of a woman tanner or cobbler. All the corpses were kept in oil at Ayodhya till the Lord returned.

Meanwhile, the Lord saw at a place that a Shudra (a low caste man) was performing severe penances by hanging upside down from a tree over a fire on the ground and inhaling smoke. This man wished to attain liberation and deliverance, and so he was doing severe form of Tapa. The Lord intervened and said that a Shudra is not supposed to do Tapa because his duty is to serve the society and if he does it diligently then it is equivalent to doing severe Tapa for him. He had violated the sanctified way of code of conduct proclaimed by the Vedas, and since it was a violation of the edict of the scripture it was indeed a sin and a wrongful conduct. It was this wrongful act of his that violated the sanctions of the Vedas which indirectly created a situation when unwarranted deaths and grieving overcame the kingdom of Ayodhya.

The Shudra asked the Lord to give him an easy means to attain liberation and deliverance of his soul if he is not supposed to do Tapa. Seeing that the soul of the Shudra had all the right to attain its emancipation and salvation though it was not supposed to do Tapa, the Lord provided him a simple key—‘My holy name ‘RAM’ is the easiest way for obtaining spiritual liberation and deliverance. So repeat it, and you shall get your desired destination. But since your act that violates the sanction of the Vedas has brought misfortune to my kingdom and others are suffering due to it, I must punish you by killing you. Concentrate your mind upon my divine Name ‘RAM’, and though you have to die now you will definitely find emancipation and salvation for yourself. When you die at my hands, you will go straight to my abode in the heaven, the divine abode of Lord Vishnu which is called Vaikunth.’ Thus, the Shudra found the heavenly abode of the Supreme Lord very easily.

As soon as this Shudra was punished by the Lord by way of killing him, all the dead persons—including the Brahmin’s son—were revived because the sin of violating the sanctions of the scriptures had been eliminated.]

Dohawali verse no. 177:

काल करम गुन दोष जग जीव तिहारे हाथ ।
तुलसी रघुबर रावरो जानु जानकीनाथ ॥ 177 ॥

kāla karama guna dōṣa jaga jīva tihārē hātha.
tulasī raghubara rāvarō jānu jānakīnātha. 177 .

Tulsidas prays to Lord Ram, saying, 'Oh Janki-Nath (Lord Sri Ram, the beloved husband of Sita)! Kaal (time; circumstance; era; death), Karma (deeds and actions, and their rewards or punishments), Guna (qualities and virtues), Dosha (faults, shortcomings and drawbacks), Jaga (the world) and its Jivas (creatures; living beings) – all are controlled by you and are under your inviolable command. [This is because Lord Ram is the personified form of the Supreme Being.]

Therefore, oh Lord, you must also accept me (Tulsidas) as one of your own (i.e. as one of your servants and devotees)'. (177)

Dohawali verse no. 277:

एक भरोसो एक बल एक आस बिस्वास ।
एक राम घन स्याम हित चातक तुलसीदास ॥ 277 ॥

ēka bharōsō ēka bala ēka āsa bisvāsa.
ēka rāma ghana syāma hita cātaka tulasīdāsa. 277 .

Tulsidas says that he has only one source of reliance, only one source of strength, only one source of hope, and only one belief or faith (and it is in Lord Ram).

Verily, Tulsidas has become like the bird 'Chatak' for the sake of the dark rain-bearing cloud in the form of Lord Ram.

[The bird 'Chatak', kind of Indian cuckoo, keeps its attention fixed on the dark rain bearing clouds during the rainy season because it is reputed to quench its thirst from the rain drops falling from it. The Chatak drinks only this rain drop falling directly from the cloud in its mouth to quench its thirst, preferring to die if the cloud does not oblige it, but does not depend upon any other source of water to survive.

Similarly, Tulsidas says that he seeks only from his beloved Lord Ram, and no one else. The analogy of the 'dark rain bearing cloud' is significant here because Lord Ram has a dark complexion that has been often compared to the colour of this cloud.

Besides this similarity, the other important factor is that like the rain-cloud magnanimously providing the earth with its nectar-like rain which supports life on this planet, Lord Ram also showers his mercy, compassion, grace, benevolence and magnanimity on all the creatures of the world to benefit from these virtues of the Lord. Like the cloud not differentiating between any two creatures when it pours its rain upon earth, for both the good and the bad people are equally provided the chance to enjoy the nectar of life in the form of rain that comes for free from heaven, the Lord's grace is abundantly available to all, irrespective of who they are or to which section of society they belong.] (277)

Dohawali verse no. 563:

श्रवन घटहुँ पुनि दृग घटहुँ घटउ सकल बल देह ।
इते घटें घटिहै कहा जौं न घटै हरिनेह ॥ 563 ॥

śravana ghaṭahum̐ puni drga ghaṭahum̐ ghaṭa'u sakala bala dēha.
itē ghaṭēm̐ ghaṭihai kahā jauṁ na ghaṭai harinēha. 563 .

[Tulsidas asserts--] The hearing power of the ears may decrease, the seeing faculty of the eyes may be diminished, and the strength of the body might weaken and the body itself might decay. But none of these handicaps matter at all (for the spiritual well-being and an exalted destination of the soul) if one's love and devotion for Lord Sri Ram (the incarnate Supreme Being) remains robust and firm, and it does not suffer (decrease or decline) despite all other adverse situations that a person may have to face in life. (563)

[This Doha lays stress on the necessity of having firm and steady faith and devotion for the Lord God.]

Dohawali verse no. 569:

तुलसी सहित सनेह नित सुमिरहु सीता राम ।
सगुन सुमंगल सुभ सदा आदि मध्य परिनाम ॥ 569 ॥

tulasī sahita sanēha nita sumirahu sītā rāma.
saguna sumāṅgala subha sadā ādi madhya parināma. 569 .

Tulsidas advises that one should constantly remember the beautiful and auspicious divine form of Lord Sri Ram with full love and devotion. By doing so it would be auspicious and highly beneficial for a spiritual aspirant as it would ensure his all-round well-being and welfare in all the three phases of time in this world—i.e. his past, his present and his future will be well taken care of. (569)

[This verse sort of summarises what one should remember in one's life: If one loves the Lord and has devotion for him then the person's all round welfare is assured. There is no doubt about it.]

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Bhakti Sutra Mala

The Devotional Path to God-Realisation

[Roman Transliteration of Text, English Exposition, Elaborate Notes on
Ram Charit Manas; Dohawali; Adhyatma Ramayan;
Tripadvibhut Maharnaryan Upanishad; Krishna's Geeta—canto 12;
Narad Bhakti Sutra & Shandilya Bhakti Sutra]

Chapter 3

‘Adhyatma Ramayan’ of Sage Veda Vyas.

‘Adhyatma Ramayan’ is one of the great epics that describe the time and life of Lord Ram who was an incarnation of the Supreme Being on earth in the form of a human being. It was written by the legendary sage Veda Vyas who is famed for his classification of the Vedas and delineating the Upanishads from the main body of these Vedas.

The concept of ‘Bhakti’ has been dealt with in its (i) Aranya Kand, Canto 3, verse no. 37-39; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 69-72.

Now let us read what these verses say about ‘Bhakti’.

(1) Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 37-39:

साधवः समचित्ता ये निःस्पृहा विगतैषिणः।
दान्ताः प्रशान्तास्त्वद्भक्ता निवृत्ताखिलकामनाः॥३७॥
इष्टप्राप्तिवित्त्योश्च समाः सङ्गविवर्जिताः।
संन्यस्ताखिलकर्माणः सर्वदा ब्रह्मतत्पराः॥३८॥
यमादिगुणसम्पन्नाः सन्तुष्टा येन केनचित्।
सत्सङ्गमो भवेद्यर्हि त्वत्कथाश्रवणे रतिः॥३९॥

sādhavaḥ samacittā ye niḥsprhā vigataiṣiṇaḥ /
dāntāḥ praśāntāstvadbhaktā nivṛttākhilakāmanāḥ // 37
iṣṭapṛāptivipattyośca samāḥ saṅgavivarjitāḥ /
saṁnyastākhilakarmāṇaḥ sarvadā brahmatatparāḥ // 38
yamādiguṇasampannāḥ santuṣṭā yena kenacit /

satsaṅgamo bhavedyarhi tvatkathāśravaṇe ratiḥ // 39

37-39. Those persons who are even-minded and stable, have equanimity and forbearance, are serene, placid, unruffled, unwavering, calm and balanced under adversities as well as favourable circumstances, both during sorrows and troubles as well as under happy and joyous situations in this world; those who are without any desires and wants whatsoever; those who do not have any attachment to their worldly assets such as their wealth and sons, nor harbour any desires pertaining to them; those who have restrained, conquered and suppressed their sense organs and their wayward tendencies or the urge for their gratification; those who are of a serene, calm, peaceful and tranquil temperament and mind; those who are sincerely devoted and dedicated to you; those who are devoid of and free from all desires, greed, avarice, yearnings and ambitions of all kinds (37); ---

those who are even-keeled, have equanimity, remain neutral, unaffected, indifferent and aloof even while going through the throes of destruction (unfavourable circumstances) or construction (favourable circumstances); those who are without encumbrances and attachments of any kind; those who abandon and forsake involvement in all types of worldly deeds and getting involved in various actions, i.e. do not regard himself as the 'doer' of any deed, nor expects any reward or punishment for it; those who are always the followers of Brahm (i.e. pursue the path of righteousness that leads to the supreme, eternal One) (38); ---

those who are endowed with 'Yam' and other virtues (e.g. self-restraint of passions and doing penances and austerities); and those who are contented and satisfied with whatever comes their way—such persons who possess these virtues are truly 'Sadhus' (i.e. person who is saintly, pious, holy, divine, pure in mind and heart, and a devotee of the Lord God). Whenever one is fortunate to get communion and a chance to interact with such saints, one develops endearment for and interest in your divine stories (i.e. in spiritualism) (39).

[Note :- Verse nos. 37-39 describe the qualities and characteristics of a true Bhakta, a true pious and saintly person who is a devotee of the Lord God.]

(2) Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 59-72:

मार्गस्त्रयो मया प्रोक्ताः पुरा मोक्षाप्तिसाधकाः।
कर्मयोगो ज्ञानयोगो भक्तियोगश्च शाश्वतः॥५९॥
भक्तिर्विभिद्यते मातस्त्रिविधा गुणभेदतः।
स्वभावो यस्य यस्तेन तस्य भक्तिर्विभिद्यते॥६०॥

mārgāstrayo mayā proktāḥ purā mokṣāptisādhakāḥ /
karmayogo jñānayogo bhaktiyogaśca śāśvataḥ // 59
bhaktirvibhidyate mātastrividhā guṇabhedataḥ /

svabhāvo yasya yastena tasya bhaktirvibhidyate // 60

59-60. Lord Ram (the human manifestation of the Supreme Being) told his worldly mother as follows: 'In some ancient time, I had prescribed the 3-fold path to deliverance, emancipation and salvation—viz. 'Karmyog' (the path of action), Gyan Yog (the path of pursuing truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment), and Bhakti Yog (the path of devotion and service to the Lord). These paths are well established, and ancient, eternal and truthful (59).

Oh mother! Bhakti can be classified into three categories depending upon the mental setup of the seeker (60).

[Note :-The three paths emphasised by the Lord are briefly summarized as follows--lead to self realisation in a man or makes him aware of the super conscious residing in him. They are — (i) Karma Yoga, (ii) Gyan Yoga, and (iii) Bhakti Yoga.

(i) Karma Yoga expounds on the importance of doing deeds and taking actions, but with a different attitude. It stresses that we must not get 'involved or attached' to those deeds or action in as much as we shouldn't be bothered about the rewards or punishments incumbent on such deeds or actions. We must do them dispassionately and with detachment. The action or deed should be treated as one's offering to the God as well as an offering to the sacred fire sacrifice. This will ensure that the actions or deeds are not unrighteousness, corrupt or evil. On the contrary, whatever is done in which a person's subtle sub-conscious says is not the correct thing to do will be deemed to be unrighteous, unethical and unlawful, and therefore cannot be an offering to either the God or the sacred fire sacrifice.

(ii) Gyan Yoga involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be 'real' but is actually like a 'shadow of the truth'. This Gyan Yoga helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following Gyan Yoga are called 'seers' because they can 'see' beyond the visible, multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. Gyan Yoga is in the realm of the intellect and discriminating mind of a creature.

(iii) Bhakti Yoga refers to having devotion for a chosen Godhead who is a person's ideal, on whom he showers all his adoration, and on whom he focuses his attention. He is emotionally and sentimentally involved with his deity. Hence, the heart is the realm of Bhakti Yoga; it helps to commune with the divine.]

यस्तु हिंसां समुद्दिश्य दम्भं मात्सर्यमेव वा।
 भेददृष्टिश्च संरम्भी भक्तो मे तामसः स्मृतः॥६१॥
 फलाभिसन्धिर्भोगार्थी धनकामो यशस्तथा।
 अर्चादौ भेदबुद्ध्या मां पुजयेत्स तु राजसः॥६२॥
 परस्मिन्नर्पितं यस्तु कर्म निर्हरणाय वा।
 कर्तव्यमिति वा कुर्याद्भेदबुद्ध्या स सात्त्विकः॥६३॥

yastu hiṃsāṃ samuddiśya dambhaṃ mātsaryameva vā /
 bhedadr̥ṣṭiśca saṃrambhī bhakto me tāmasaḥ smṛtaḥ // 61

phalābhisandhirbhogārthī dhanakāmo yaśastathā /
 arcādaṁ bhedabuddhyā māṁ pūjayetsa tu rajasah // 62
 parasminnarpitaṁ yastu karma nirharaṇāya vā /
 kartavyamiti vā kuryādbhedabuddhyā sa sātṭvikaḥ // 63

61-63. [There are three types of devotees depending upon the predominance of one or the other types of the three qualities called Gunas in them.]

Those who are savage and cruel, those who have arrogance, vanity, ego and false pride, those who have hatred, animosity, envy, malice, ill-will and jealousy in their heart, those who are biased and see duality in this creation, have vested interests and are not equitable, even and uniform towards all, and those who have anger and mercurial temper, are wrathful and seek vengeance—such persons are called ‘Tamas Bhakts’. [That is, such devotees have the worst type of qualities in them.] (61).

Those who seek, yearn for or covet rewards, those who seek and yearn for comforts or pleasures of the materialistic world, gratification of senses and pursue wealth and fame, and those who differentiate between various methods to worship me—such persons are called ‘Rajas Bhakts’. [Rajas is the medium quality in a man.] (62).

Those who have the thought that one must not sit idle and instead do something, and those who do deeds in order to offer all the rewards to the Lord, or in other words, regards all the work as being Lord's work and himself as merely doing his assigned duties—persons with such a thought process and inclination of mind are called ‘Satwic Bhakts’ (63).

मद्गुणाश्रयणादेव मय्यनन्तगुणालये ।
 अविच्छिन्ना मनोवृत्तिर्यथा गङ्गाम्बुनोऽम्बुधौ ॥६४॥
 तदेव भक्तियोगस्य लक्षणं निर्गुणस्य हि ।
 अहैतुक्यव्यवहिता या भक्तिर्मयि जायते ॥६५॥
 सा मे सालोक्यसामीप्यसार्धिसायुज्यमेव वा ।
 ददात्यपि न ग्रह्णन्ति भक्ता मत्सेवनं विना ॥६६॥

madguṇāśrayaṇādeva mayyanantaguṇālaye /
 avicchinṇā manovṛttiriyathā gaṅgāmbuno'mbudhau // 64
 tadeva bhaktiyogasya lakṣaṇaṁ nirguṇasya hi /
 ahaitukyavyavahitā yā bhaktirmayi jāyate // 65
 sā me sālokyasāmīpyasārṣṭisāyujyameva vā /
 dadātyapi na grhṇanti bhaktā matsevanaṁ vinā // 66

64-66. If the natural and inherent tendencies and inclinations of a person's mind and intellect are constantly, consistently and persistently diverted towards me and fixed upon me and my immeasurably auspicious virtues and divine form that is sublime, ethereal, eternal and transcendental, then these are the signs of my devotion that is called ‘Nirgun Bhakti’ (i.e. devotion for the supreme transcendental Being who is without attributes, forms and names). Towards this end, the medium is to sing my auspicious glories and virtues deeds (by narrating, reading, reciting, singing in unison,

writing, discussing and thinking about my divine stories, qualities and the noble virtues and values for which I stand). In this state of existence, the devotee loses his individuality and merges his own self with me even as the water of the holy river Ganges ceaselessly and constantly flows into and merges with the ocean to become one with it when it falls in it.

As a result of this unwavering, steady, consistent and constant devotion for me that sprouts in the pure heart of my ardent and wise devotee who is selfless and sincere in his spiritual pursuits, four types of Muktis are easily available. These four forms of emancipation and salvation that are bestowed upon him are known as (a) Salokya, (b) Samipya, (c) Saristi, and (d) Saujya.

But my true devotee is so devoted to me that he would rather choose to serve me than accept any one or more forms of Mukti. [That is, a true and ardent devotee does not accept them or anything else except the opportunity to serve me, even if these Mokshas or Muktis are offered to him for the asking.] (64-66).

[Note :- The four categories of emancipation and salvation as described in verse no. 66 are as follows :— (a) Salokya—To attain Vaikunth or heaven or the abode of Lord Vishnu; in other words to live in the abode of the chosen deity; (b) Samipya—To remain close to the Lord every moment; (c) Saristi, also known as Sarupya—To achieve glory, fame and renown similar to the Lord; to have a form and virtues similar to the chosen deity; and (d) Saujya—To become one with the Lord; to merge one's own self with the chosen deity.]

स एवात्यन्तिको योगो भक्तिमार्गस्य भामिनि ।
 मद्भावं प्राप्नुयात्तेन अतिक्रम्य गुणत्रयम् ॥६७॥
 महता कामहनेन स्वधर्माचरणेन च ।
 कर्मयोगेन शस्तेन वर्जितेन विहिंसनात् ॥६८॥
 मद्दर्शनस्तुतिमहापूजाभिः स्मृतिवन्दनैः ।
 भूतेषु मद्भावनया सङ्गेनासत्यवर्जनैः ॥६९॥
 बहुमानेन महतां दुःखिनामनुकम्पया ।
 स्वसमानेषु मैङ्गला च यमादीनां निषेवया ॥७०॥
 वेदान्तवाक्यश्रवणान्मम नामानुकीर्तनात् ।
 सत्सङ्गेनार्जवेणैव ह्यहमः परिवर्जनात् ॥७१॥
 कांक्षया मम धर्मस्य परिशुद्धान्तरो जनः ।
 मद्गुणश्रवणादेव याति मामञ्जसा जनः ॥७२॥

sa evātyantiko yogo bhaktimārgasya bhāmini /
 madbhāvaṃ prāpnuyātena atikramya guṇatrayam // 67
 mahatā kāmahīnena svadharmācaraṇena ca /
 karmayogena śastena varjitena vihiṃsanāt // 68
 maddarśanastutimahāpūjābhiḥ smṛtivandanaiḥ /
 bhūteṣu madbhāvanayā saṅgenāsatyavarjanaiḥ // 69
 bahumānena mahatāṃ duḥkhināmanukampayā /
 svasamāneṣu maitryā ca yamādināṃ niṣevayā // 70

vedāntavākyaśravaṇānmama nāmānukīrtanāt /
 satsaṅgenārjavenaiva hyahamaḥ parivarjanāt // 71
 kāṅkṣayā mama dharmasya pariśuddhāntaro janaḥ /
 madgūṇaśravaṇādeva yāti māmāñjasā janaḥ // 72

67-72. Oh noble lady ('Bhamini'; mother)! This is the best, foremost and most important means and path to adopt while following the path of devotion and worship. [The 'means and path' referred here are the ones prescribed in verse no. 64-66.] By adopting it and following it, the devotee transcends all the three Gunas (Satwic, Rajsic, Tamsic) and becomes one with me (67).

Now I shall tell you other means to have devotion for the Nirgun form of the Lord—i.e. the formless, attributeless, nameless, unqualified and sublime entity that is all-pervading, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, transcendental and supreme in the creation. One should follow most righteously and selflessly the assigned duties and behavioural norms according to the section of the society to which one belongs without any attachments to the actions and the deeds as well as their results; one should follow the best doctrine of non-violence while doing anything (68); ---

--- one should reverentially have my Darshan (holy viewings of my relics, pilgrim sites, symbols etc.); one should pray to me and sing devotional hymns in my honour; one should worship me, show respect and reverence to me and adore me; one should constantly remember and honour me; one should regard all creatures as my image (or in other words, think that I am present in all the creatures); one should abandon lies, fraud, cheating, deceit and falsehood, and instead of it, one should find and pursue the company of saints and holy people (69); ---

--- one should show the greatest of respect and honour to those who are noble and great souls; one should be merciful, kind and compassionate towards those who are miserable, distressed, unfortunate, in need, in agony and suffering; one should befriend people of same standing in society (i.e. be on friendly terms with one's peers and compatriots); one should rigorously follow the laws of 'Yam and Niyam' (i.e. restraint of passions, sense organs, mind-intellect apparatus etc. is called Yam, and following the path of righteousness, probity, propriety and nobility is called Niyam) (70); ---

--- one should attentively hear the various edicts, proclamations, tenets, maxims and great sayings as pronounced by the Vedas; one should chant and sing my holy name, glories and virtues in chorus with a group of other devotees; one should have the company (communion, interaction) of holy, pious and saintly people (where spiritual matters are talked about) as well as have humble, soft, sweet and pleasant temperament and demeanours; one should abandon Ahankar (ego, pride, haughtiness and arrogance) (71); ---

--- and one should have an honest and sincere wish and desire to follow the auspicious path of spiritualism and righteousness—such a person is deemed to have purified and cleansed his mind-intellect complex (the subtle body of the creatures) from all impurities. Having done so, if he hears the legends of my auspicious and noble virtues, glories, values and characteristics, he can easily attain me (i.e. my Nirgun form). That is, he merges his soul into my supreme Soul and becomes one with me (72).

[Note :- (i) Verse nos. 66 and 67 deal with the Sagun form of Bhakti i.e. the path of devotion and adoration for the Lord's incarnations in flesh and bones as a human

being. This is the visible and tangible form of the Lord having attributes and characteristics.

(ii) Verse nos. 68-72 have been clubbed together because they deal with the subject of how to attain Nirgun Bhakti as opposed to Sagun Bhakti. Indeed, from a more secular and practical point of view, one must note that all these qualities will make a man noble and perfect. Perfection, virtuousness and wise discrimination in the behavioural and thought patterns will make a man noble and God-like. His soul would have freed itself from the shackles of worldly muck and slush and elevated itself to a noble stature of Godliness. This upliftment of the soul from the deep pit of slush representing the materialistic, artificial and entrapping world is equivalent to being liberated and delivered from its snare. This is equivalent to emancipation and salvation of the soul. Bhakti is a way to achieve this end.]

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Bhakti Sutra Mala

The Devotional Path to God-Realisation

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Chapter 4

‘Tripadvibhūt Maha-Narayan Upanishad’

The ‘Tripadvibhūt Maha-Narayan Upanishad is the 11th Upanishad in the Atharva Veda tradition. It expounds on the metaphysical aspect of Lord Maha-Narayan, or Lord Vishnu, who is the cosmic form of the Supreme Being. During its exposition, it describes the concept of ‘Bhakti’ in Canto 8, verse nos. 12-14. It essentially says that without having this glorious virtue, or without practicing Bhakti (devotion for Lord God) it is not possible for a creature to find liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

अमानित्वादिलक्षणोपलक्षितो यः पुरुषः स एव निरालम्बयोगाधिकारी कार्यः कश्चिदस्ति ।
तस्मात्सर्वेषामधिकारिणामनधिकारिणां भक्तियोग एव प्रशस्यते । भक्तियोगो निरुपद्रवः ।
भक्तियोगान्मुक्तिः । बुद्धिमतामनायासेनाचिरादेव तत्त्वज्ञानं भवति । १२ ।

amānitvādilakṣhaṇopalakṣhitō yaḥ puruṣaḥ sa eva nirālbambayōgādhikārī
kāryaḥ kaścidasti . talmātsarvēṣāmadhikārṇāmanadhikārīṇām bhaktiyōga eve
praśasyatē .
bhaktiyōgō nirupadravaḥ . bhaktiyōgānmuktiḥ .
buddhimatāmanāyāsēnāchirādēva tattvajñānaṁ bhavati . 12 .

12. [The Guru removed the doubts of his disciple by teaching as follows—] ‘A person who possesses the noble virtue of not having any trace of Ahankar or false pride and ego in him (i.e. who is humble and simple-hearted), a person who has realised that the Tattva (the essence, the truth) he is pursuing is eternal and imperishable, that this Tattva is the pure consciousness that resides in his own self as the Atma rather than anywhere outside, that this Atma is of a very subtle and sublime nature, that it cannot be physically verified or grasped like the material sense objects of this world but can only be experienced and witnessed at the subtle level of existence, that this Atma is a

microcosmic image of the cosmic Atma known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Being, whom he wishes to attain, that junking of the delusions created by the numerous misconceptions in this world is the only way to successfully reach this goal, a person who has inculcated other such noble and wise thoughts—such persons are eligible to follow the path of Niraalmaba Yoga. In other words, only a person who has acquired truthful Gyan is eligible and competent to follow and attain success in the path of Niraalamba Yoga. But it is extremely rare to find such a person.

Hence, it is said that the spiritual path of ‘Bhakti Yoga’¹ to obtain Mukti is an excellent and the easiest path to follow irrespective of the fact whether the candidate is eligible or ineligible for following the path of Niraalamba Yoga.

Bhakti Yoga is without any discernible hurdles or big obstacles that may be too difficult to overcome. Bhakti Yoga bestows Mukti—i.e. it helps the spiritual aspirant to obtain liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

Devotees or the followers of Bhakti Yoga are able to obtain ‘Tattva-Gyan’ or knowledge of the essential Truth, without much effort or delay.’ [In other words, they can experience the Anand, or the spiritual bliss that comes with awareness of the essential principle of creation, the ‘Tattva’, that becomes known upon self-realisation and Brahm-realisation much easily even without having to unduly exert themselves or follow stern doctrines. When a person reaches the spiritual goal of Brahm-realisation, he enthusiastically proclaims the statements called the ‘Mahavakyas’, which are essentially a self-realised and spiritually enlightened person’s declaration of the universal Truth about the Soul and Pure Consciousness. It marks the culmination of his spiritual journey.] (12).

[Note—¹It is easy to follow the path of Bhakti Yoga, or having devotion for and submission to the chosen deity as a means to attain Mukti, or liberation and deliverance from this world, from the gross body, from the cycle of birth and death, and from the accompanying endless cycle of miseries, pains, sorrows, troubles and torments.

Hence, it is usually prescribed as the general and easy method for obtaining Mukti as it would be effective whether or not the concerned person is sufficiently fine-tuned mentally, intellectually and emotionally to follow the more evolved and powerful, but rather complex and arduous path of Niraalamba Yoga, thinking it to be too abstract and difficult to be followed by them.

On careful examination we see that there is a subtle difference between all the three types of Yogas prescribed in this Upanishad for attaining Mukti. In Bhakti Yoga complete devotion, faith and submission is expected for a single deity of choice of the spiritual aspirant. In this, it is similar to the Saalamba Yoga because it takes the help of some form of deity to whom the seeker of Mukti surrenders himself and has devotion for.

Pure form of Saalamba Yoga involves many sorts of ritualistic practices such as doing fire sacrifices, observing sacraments and chanting of Mantras, undertaking formal forms of worship using Yantras and Chakras described earlier in this Upanishad, honouring a plethora of Gods and Goddesses, doing charities and other noble deeds, and so on and so forth. These follow a set pattern, whereas in Bhakti Yoga the devotee can worship his deity the way he wants—he can treat his God as his son, his friend, his beloved, his life-partner, his Lord, his Guru, etc., and go about devoting himself to the chose deity accordingly. This freedom of approach is denied in the rigorous form of Saalamba Yoga which relies on formalities and strict

observance of rules and tenets. Therefore, Bhakti is informal while Saalamba is formal.

The Niraalamba Yoga, on the other hand, does away with all externals completely. It needs no external forms of deities to whom worship is offered, nor does it need formal exercises such as the fire sacrifices. It has the dominant role of Gyan—pursuance of truthful knowledge and the path shown by it. It is mind-centric because it revolves around knowledge, erudition, wisdom and enlightenment. Here the intellect and the mind play the dominant role instead of the gross body that played the main role in Bhakti Yoga and the Saalamba Yoga. The Niraalmaba Yoga uses Gyan as a tool to achieve Mukti. This is of course the path of meditation and contemplation that leads to self and Brahm realisation.

In practice, a wise man is one who employs a judicious mix of all the three forms of Yoga to reach his spiritual goal. It's like a man employing many modes to reach his chosen destination—he treks, hitch-hikes, rides a horse, takes a boat, at times swims, and may adopt any convenient method that is handy for him. His main objective is to reach the destination.]

तत्कथमिति । १३ ।

tatkathamiti . 13.

13. [The disciple wished to know more about this Tattva Gyan, so he enquired]—
‘How can one have this Tattva Gyan?’ (13).

भक्तवत्सलः स्वयमेव सर्वेभ्यो मोक्षविघ्नेभ्यो भक्तिनिष्ठान्तस्सर्वान्परिपालयति ।
सर्वाभीष्टान्प्रयच्छति । मोक्षं दापयति । चतुर्मुखादीनां सर्वेषामपि विना विष्णुभक्त्या कल्पकोटिभिर्मोक्षो
न विद्यते । कारणेन विना कार्यं नोदेति । भक्त्या विना ब्रह्मज्ञानं कदापि न जायते । तस्मात्त्वमपि
सर्वोपायान्परित्यज्य भक्तिमाश्रय । भक्तिनिष्ठो भव । भक्तिनिष्ठो भव । भक्त्या सर्वसिद्धयः सिध्यन्ति ।
भक्त्याऽसाध्यं न किञ्चिदस्ति । १४ ।

Bhaktavatsalahḥ swayamēva sarvēbhyō mōkshaviḡhnēbhyō
bhaktiniṣṭhantsarvānparipālayati . sr̥vābhīṣṭhānprayachhati . mōkṣhaṃ
dāyapati . cturmurkhādīnāṃ sarvēṣāmapī vinā viṣṇubhaktayā
kalpakōtibhirmōkṣhō na vidyatē . kāraṇēna vinā karyaṃ nōdēti . bhaktyā vinā
brahmajñānāṃ kadāpi na jāyatē . tasmāttvamapi sarvopāyānparityajya
bhaktimāśraya . bhaktiniṣṭhō bhava . bhaktiniṣṭhō bhava . bhaktayā
sarvasiddhayaḥ siddhyanti . bhaktayā'sādhyam na kiṃcidasti . 14.

14. [The learned teacher replied in order to enlighten the disciple—] ‘The Lord who loves all his devotees very much himself ensures that all their spiritual hurdles are effectively removed. He protects them from all the troubles or nuisance created by the numerous obstacles that the devotee might face, and which may cause harm to him or hinder his spiritual progress.

The Lord gives them all that they want; he provides the devotee with Moksha or final and ultimate liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation.

[On close examination, these three statements that the Lord removes all hurdles faced by the devotee, fulfils all his desires, and provides him with Moksha has another meaning. It is that the Lord takes upon him the responsibility of ensuring that the path of the devotee becomes smooth and easy, that he is not subjected to undue harshness and inconvenience, that all his basic needs are taken care of, and that he graduates to reach the spiritual destination of Mukti or Moksha even if he is not up to the expected mark or standard. It is like the doting father taking care of his dear son and ensuring his comfort along with taking care of his future needs in life by giving him proper education and training. If the son is mentally not so smart, the loving father would take a little bit extra care of him as compared to another son who is of first-rate mental capabilities and able to fend for himself. Likewise, if the devotee is less than competent, the Lord holds him by the arm and helps him on along the path leading to Mukti. This is the benefit of following the path of Bhakti Yoga. When the devotee has surrendered himself to the Lord, when he is totally dependent upon the Lord for his well-being, it becomes the moral obligation of the Lord to take care of him. The devotee henceforth becomes carefree just like a child is in the care of its doting parents.]

As compared to this situation there is the other optional path that leads to Mukti, and it is the path of Niraalamba Yoga wherein the aspirant is left to fend for himself much like the case of an intelligent son who is left to fend for himself by the father who diverts all his attention to the less privileged son.

This is the simple reason why Bhakti Yoga is preferable to the other path of Niraalamba Yoga.]

In the absence of Bhakti for Lord Vishnu, even the exalted and learned Gods such as Brahma (the creator who had produced the Vedas which are repositories of knowledge) can not expect to find Mukti in millions of years or countless births.

Since there can be no 'Kaarya' (affect, development, action leading to some situation, some proceeding or transaction) without a corresponding 'Kaaran' (an inspiration, a cause, reason or motive), it follows that without Bhakti (devotion for the Lord, the Supreme Being; or steady desire to obtain Mukti and Truth) there can be no Brahm-Gyan (knowledge or awareness of Brahm; Brahm-realisation) which is a synonym for 'Tattva Gyan' (knowledge of the essence, the Truth), along with its attendant Anand (or bliss) and Mukti (or spiritual liberation).

[In other words, Bhakti motivates the aspirant to move closer to his chosen and beloved deity to whom he is fully devoted and committed, which in this case is Adi-Narayan or Brahm. When he single-mindedly pursues his spiritual objective, he would discover all about this Brahm because he is determined to do so. He would be able to discover that the Lord whom the world has been searching elsewhere is secretly enshrined in his own subtle heart as the Atma, and that there is no need to make strenuous efforts and exert one self to meet this Lord. The Lord is available at all times even without observing any formalities and time limitations by simply turning inwards and meditating. Why would the man, who has discovered the priceless gem hidden in his own pocket, not exult in joy, exclaiming 'Eureka'. This is exactly what happens with the follower of Bhakti Yoga. He discovers Brahm, and this leads to his Mukti or Moksha much more easily and conveniently. It is Bhakti which is the cause of his attaining Mukti and Brahm-Gyan.

Hence, Bhakti is the 'Kaaran', or the inspiring factor or the cause that leads to the spiritual aspirant attaining Mukti/Moksh. The attainment of Mukti or Moksha

would be the effect or the result of having Bhakti. Similarly, Bhakti is also the motivating factor that inspires the aspirant to obtain Brahm-Gyan or knowledge of the truth and the reality of everything that is associated with the term 'Brahm' (the Supreme Being, the cosmic Consciousness, the supreme Atma known as the Parmatma) because he would like to know more about the Lord whom he worships and adores so lovingly. This attainment of Brahm-Gyan would be the spontaneous effect, result, or the 'Kaarya' of Bhakti.]

Therefore, you (the disciple) should abandon all other methods and take the shelter of (i.e. adopt) Bhakti as the chosen path. Be diligent and steady in Bhakti. I (the teacher) repeat—adopt Bhakti as your chosen path, and be steady in it. All the 'Siddhis' (mystical powers and spiritual achievements) are easily and conveniently available by following the path of Bhakti. There is nothing that cannot be achieved or attained by Bhakti.' (14).

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Chapter 5

‘Srimad Bhagvad-Geeta, Canto 12’

Srimad Bhagvad Geeta is a famous scripture that is basically a discourse given to Arjun by Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu who had revealed himself earlier as Lord Ram during Tretayug which was the second of the 4-era cycle of creation and destruction. Lord Krishna came during the third era known as Dwapar. The present era is the fourth in the said cycle and it is known as Kaliyug, while the first was known as Sata-yug.

Srimad Bhagvad Geeta is rich with spiritual, metaphysical and theological philosophy. The concept of ‘Bhakti Yoga’, the devotional path to God-realisation that helps to establish a union of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul is described in this Book's Chapter or Canto 12 by Lord Krishna himself.

Bhakti Yoga is the path that brings about a union or oneness between the individual creature and the Lord God, the path that establishes a union or oneness between the individual Atma or soul of the creature, and the Supreme Soul or the Parmatma in this creation.

A word of caution here: When the phrase “Lord God” is used anywhere in the text it refers to the ‘Supreme Being’ whom the devotee worships. This Supreme Being is the Lord as well as the God for the devotee. A person may have other Lords and Masters in this world to whom he is obliged to pay his respects to and be obedient to because of exigencies of life in the world; and similarly there are hosts of other Gods in this creation too before whom a creature is obliged to bow and keep them in good humour. But the person does so only because he is under obligation to honour them and obey them for practical reasons even if he does not want to do so. But the ‘Lord God’ is someone for whom love, respect and adoration comes spontaneously from within the heart of the person, for this ‘Lord God’ represents the Supreme Being who is the person's loving Father and Redeemer, his true Friend and his spiritual Destiny. This

‘Lord God’ is the one whom Jesus Christ referred to as “My Father”, and who is called “Brahm” by the Upanishads and the Vedas. Therefore, when the term “Lord God” is used in our text, the reader must clearly understand that it is referring to the Supreme Being who has manifested in the particular form that is loved, adored, revered and worshipped by the individual devotee. It may be the Lord’s visible form with attributes (such as those of Lord Ram or Lord Krishna), or the Lord’s invisible cosmic form that is known as pure Consciousness that has no attributes or discernible forms (such as Brahm). It is the devotee’s choice as to how he would prefer to worship and love the Lord God who is the Almighty Supreme Being and whose primary form is nothing but ‘pure cosmic Consciousness’.

Primarily, there are two paths to God-realisation. Both these are equally effective and potent, and both lead to the same goal. These two paths are known as ‘Saguna Bhakti’ and ‘Nirguna Bhakti’.

The word ‘Saguna’ means the form of the Lord God that is visible and has attributes, and therefore ‘Saguna Bhakti’ means worshipping the Lord in his manifested and visible form (such as for example we have Lord Ram or Lord Krishna). Those who pursue this path to God-realisation are called ‘Sagun Bhaktas’.

On the other hand, ‘Nirguna’ means one without any attributes and forms, one that is invisible and all-pervading. Hence, ‘Nirguna Bhakti’ relates to worshipping and adoring the formless, invisible, all-pervading and cosmic form of the Lord that is sublime and exists in the form of cosmic Consciousness (a form that is known as Brahm). Since this is an abstract concept beyond the reach of the common man, those who pursue it are deemed to be exceptionally enlightened, wise and self-realised; they have that knowledge of the Truth that is not easy for others to comprehend. Such devotees of the Lord God who worship his cosmic pure conscious form are known as ‘Gyanis’ or ‘Nirguna Bhaktas’.

Both these terms, viz, ‘Bhakta’ and ‘Gyani’, therefore refer to the devotees and worshippers of the same Lord God, they are equally loved and blessed by the Lord, and are equally important in the spiritual field like the two sides of the same coin that together give value to that coin. The only difference is that they adopt different paths leading to the same spiritual goal.

Since both these paths lead to the union of the devotee with his chosen deity, they are called ‘Yoga’ as this term means union of two entities. But whereas the ‘Saguna’ form of Yoga pertains to the worship of the Lord who has a definite form, the ‘Nirguna’ form of Yoga relates to worshipping the Lord’s cosmic invisible form that has no specific form as it is all-pervading and without attributes or without gunas.

Canto 12 of Srimad Bhagvad Geeta is in the form of a question-and-answer between Arjun and Lord Krishna. Arjun basically asks the Lord which of the Lord’s two forms—viz. Saguna and Nirguna—is easy to worship and adore. Lord Krishna replies that both are powerful and effective tools for God-realisation, but the path of ‘Saguna Bhakti’ is preferred by those who find it easy and convenient to focus their attention on something they can see and feel personally at the physical plane in this gross physical world, who find it easy to worship the Lord by employing their bodies in the physical service of the Lord God rather than using the mind for this service and

keeping the body and its sense organs completely under control. The path of ‘Nirguna Bhakti’ is preferred by those who have become highly self-realised and enlightened about the Truth of the Lord God inasmuch as they experience and observe the presence of the Lord everywhere in a sublime and subtle form. Such devotees and worshippers of the Lord recognize that he is pure Consciousness personified, and therefore is invisible, all-pervading and omnipresent. In fact they realize that the Lord God cannot be limited to any given form; the Lord cannot be delineated by any specific body. So they worship the cosmic and universal form of the Lord.

Now, let us read Canto 12 of Srimad Bhagvad Geeta.

अर्जुन उवाच

एवं सततयुक्ता ये भक्तास्त्वां पर्युपासते।

येचाप्यक्षरमव्यक्तं तेषां के योगवित्तमाः॥१२.१॥

arjuna uvāca

ēvaṁ satatayuktā yē bhaktāstvāṁ paryupāsātē|

yēcāpyakṣaramavyaktaṁ tēṣāṁ kē yōgavittamāḥ||12.1||

Arjun said (asked Lord Krishna): ‘Oh Lord, in this way (as mentioned in the previous canto) there are two types of devotees who worship you—viz. one who worship and adore your Saguna form, i.e. your form that is visible and has attributes, and others who worship and adore your Nirguna form, i.e. your supreme cosmic form¹ that is invisible, unmanifest, and without any attributes. Out of the two types of devotees, who is the one who has attained a higher understanding of the true meaning of Yoga; who has attained that state of Yoga that is regarded as the highest level of spiritual attainment for an aspirant. [To wit, out of these two types of devotees and worshippers of the Lord, who has understood the meaning of God-realisation and oneness with the Lord better, who has achieved a higher state of Self-and-God realization. Who has reached the pinnacle of Yoga?] {Please be kind to explain this to me.}’ (12.1)

[¹The supreme form of the Lord that has a cosmic presence is known as ‘Brahm’. This form is pure Consciousness, Truth, Knowledge and Bliss personified. It is subtle and sublime; it is eternal and unchanging; it is all-pervading and all-encompassing.

Examples of the Saguna form of Brahm are Lord Ram and Lord Krishna. The Nirguna form of Brahm has no name and form, as it is pure Consciousness. It is best known as the Atma or the soul of the living being, an entity that is too subtle to be seen and felt. The ‘truth’ of this Brahm is best understood by experience.]

श्री भगवानुवाच

मयावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते।

शूद्रया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मताः॥१२.२॥

śrī bhagavānuvāca

mayyāvēśya manō yē mām nityayuktā upāsātē|

śraddhayā parayōpētāstē mē yuktatamā matāḥ||12.2||

Lord Krishna replied: ‘Those who have complete faith in me (the Supreme Being), those who worship me by having their mind totally devoted to me, those who have established oneness of their mind with me through meditation—verily, I consider such devotees as having attained the pinnacle of Yoga; they are highly attained Yogis who have reached the zenith of Yoga, and have understood the true meaning of Yoga¹. Verily, this is my view on the subject. (12.2)

[¹The word ‘Yoga’ means to establish a union between any two entities. So any spiritual path that can bring the creature closer to the Lord God, and help his Atma or soul to ultimately merge with the Supreme Soul that is known as the Parmatma, is called Yoga. Since the mind is the powerhouse that guides a creature and drives all his activities, so it is the mind that can lead the creature successfully and enable him to reach his spiritual goal by focusing his attention on the Lord God who is consciousness, truth, bliss, peace and joy personified, instead of diverting the same attention towards the gross material world and its delusory charms.

Remember: a person is where his mind is. He may be physically present somewhere, but if the mind is focused elsewhere than he may not even be aware of what is actually happening in the real time in his immediate environ. He will be like ‘day-dreaming’ or like an absent-minded person. So therefore, true Yoga is not merely involvement of the body in doing meditation that constitutes certain postures and exercises such as self-restraint, but it involves the focusing of the mind on the target to be achieved, concentration of the mind on this target, which in this case is attaining oneness with the Lord God.

The Yoga which Lord Krishna endorses in this verse refers to here is the ‘mental form of worship’ of the Lord’s recognizable form that is easy to relate with and easy to love and have affection with. This Yoga is the one in which the practitioner remembers the Lord God while doing his duties normally in this world, for it does not involve the physical body nor that part of the mind that controls its routine activities, but that deeper aspect of the mind that relates to sub-conscious and thought. They should be focused on the Lord.

That is why Lord Krishna specifically refers to the ‘mind’ that is deeply involved in Yoga or meditating on the Lord, for Yoga usually refers to the control of the senses and the activities of the physical body. Krishna emphasizes that worshipping that involves physical processes and rituals are not important to him, and they never actually benefit the spiritual aspirant, if the ‘mind’ is not truly involved.

By corollary, if a person’s mind is involved in worshipping the Lord, then the physical presence of the Lord is not at all needed or necessary. For then the Lord would reside in the worshipper’s thoughts and sub-conscious so much so that his devotee would remember and worship him every moment of his life, whether awake or asleep. Such a devotee’s very being, his very existence, is surrounded by the symbolic sky that personifies the cosmic Consciousness.

At the culmination of the Saguna Yoga the spiritual aspirant’s mind is completely and steadily fixed on the thoughts of the Saguna form of the Lord God.

The practitioner of this Yoga is not at all disturbed by any of the inputs from the external world. His entire existence revolves around the thoughts of the Lord God whom he adores and worships.

Obviously, this is the highest and the best form of devotion or ‘Bhakti’.]

ये त्वक्षरमनिर्देश्यमव्यक्तं पर्युपासते।

सर्वत्रगमचिन्त्यं च कूटस्थमचलं ध्रुवम्॥१२.३॥

संनियम्येन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र समबुद्धयः।

ते प्राप्नुवन्ति मामेव सर्वभूतहिते रताः॥१२.४॥

yē tvakṣaramanirdēśyamavyaktaṁ paryupāsatē|

sarvatragamacintyaṁ ca kūṭasthamacalaṁ dhruvam||12.3||

saṁnīyamyēndriyagrāmaṁ sarvatra samabuddhayaḥ|

tē prāpnuvanti māmēva sarvabhūtahitē ratāḥ||12.4||

[Krishna continued to explain--] Those (devotees or spiritual aspirants) also attain me (the Supreme Being; Brahm) who worship my form that has a cosmic dimension—i.e. a form that is imperishable and eternal, that is invisible, sublime and subtle, that cannot be described and be comprehended, that is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing, that is unchanging, immutable and immovable, and that has no attributes and definitions. It ought to be remembered that such exalted spiritual aspirants are also expected to have other excellent qualities in them—such as being able to practice exemplary self-control over their senses, having equanimity, an even and balanced mind that is calm and unruffled, and who treat all other creatures equally and engage in activities that would take care of their welfare. [This is because they treat all living beings as my form; they see me in the form of all living beings.] (12.3 and 12.4)

[In the previous verse Lord Krishna stresses the importance of a ‘Saguna Bhakta’ as he is very dear to him. But does that mean that the Lord gives less importance to the ‘Nirguna Bhakta’, i.e. those who worship the Lord’s cosmic form that is pure Consciousness personified? These two verses address this question. The unequivocal answer of the Lord is: ‘The Nirguna Bhakta who worships my cosmic all-pervading form that has no visible attributes is equally qualified to attain me’.

So what’s the difference? Simply put, it is this: The Nirguna Bhakta is like an adult person who relies on his own abilities, skills, strength and knowledge to acquire what he wants, whereas a Saguna Bhakta is like a child that depends on its parent for all its needs. In the case of a Nirguna Bhakta, the Lord lets him chalk out his own path in his spiritual endeavours, though of course the Lord would be always there to extend a helping hand should the aspirant need some help from him. In the case of a Saguna Bhakta, the Lord takes up the responsibility of hand-holding him to help him attain his objective. This is an important difference, because while the Nirguna Bhakta has

no excuses for his failure to reach his declared goal, which is the union of his ‘self’ (i.e. his pure conscious Atma or soul) with the cosmic ‘Self’ (the Brahm; the cosmic Consciousness), because he has chosen to rely on his own knowledge and powers to achieve success, the Saguna Bhakta can easily relax as he would put the blame on his ‘parent’ (the Lord God whom he worships) for all his problems and failures. To obviously the Lord is very alert in the latter case!

Another way to understand this difference is by this simple example: A Nirguna Bhakta is like the boatman who rows his own boat across a turbulent river to reach the other side, and a Saguna Bhakta is like someone who takes a ride on a boat rowed by an expert and seasoned boatman. So if the things turn nasty, the plans go awry and misfortune descends midstream on the boat, the self-driving boatman would be helpless as he has no one to help and advise him, and if he was not actually an expert in the craft of rowing a boat and being able to manoeuvre it through a turbulent river as he thought himself to be out of an inflated self-pride or ego, then he would be doomed to sink and die. On the other hand, the person who rides a boat rowed by an expert and seasoned boatman can sit quietly and relax as he is sure the boatman knows the trick to overcome such situations and take the boat safe and secure across the river.

In Nirguna Bhakti the spiritual aspirant attains oneness of his Atma (soul) with the cosmic Atma or the Supreme Soul. In Saguna Bhakti the spiritual aspirant attains oneness with the deity he worships. So, a successful Nirguna Bhakta becomes a personified form of Brahm, and the Saguna Bhakta becomes a personified form of the Lord God whom he worships.

Once again, since there is basically no difference between the Nirguna and the Saguna forms of the Lord, as they pertain to the same divinity existing at two levels or planes of existence, there is also no difference between a successful Nirguna Bhakta and a Saguna Bhakta who have attained their final spiritual goal.

One very important point is to be noted here. The culmination of any form of Yoga (meditation) is the attainment of a state known as ‘Turiya’. This is the transcendental state of existence of consciousness. It goes beyond the other three states known as (i) waking or Jagrat state, (ii) dreaming or Swapna state, (iii) post-dreaming or deep-sleep state that is called Sushupta state. In the Turiya state of transcendental existence, the mind remains neutral and is not at all affected by any of the inputs gathered by the sense organs of the body from the external world. However, during this state of existence, the only awareness is that of pure consciousness.

This metaphysical concept can be applied to the Saguna Yoga and Nirguna Yoga as well. So, the culmination of the Saguna Yoga is when the spiritual aspirant’s mind is completely and steadily fixed on the thoughts of the Saguna form of the Lord God. The practitioner of this Yoga is not at all disturbed by any of the inputs from the external world. Likewise, the culmination of the Nirguna Yoga is when the spiritual aspirant’s mind is fixed on the thoughts of the Atma, the pure consciousness that is independent of the gross physical body.

However, there is one more state of existence that goes even beyond the ‘Turiya’ state—it is called ‘Turiya-teet’, i.e. “that which is beyond the Turiya”; “that which is reached after Turiya”. So while a spiritual seeker living in the Turiya state can come back to the state of awareness of this gross world, the one who has reached the ‘Turiya-teet’ state lives perpetually in the world of transcendental existence; there is no coming back for him to the grossness of this mundane life.

Hence, at the culmination of Saguna Yoga, the Bhakta (devotee) finally merges with the Lord whom he adores and worships. Such a devotee's physical form merges with the physical form of the Lord God whom he or she worships. A stellar example is of the female devotee of Lord Krishna who is known as Mira Bai; she loved Lord Krishna extremely dearly.

And in the same vein, at the culmination of the Nirguna Yoga the Bhakta finally sheds his mortal coil to free his Atma from the fetters of his gross physical body, thereby enabling his individual Atma to merge with the cosmic Atma that pervades everywhere in the sky outside the limits of his gross body.]

वतेशोऽधिकतरस्तेषामव्यक्तासक्तचेतसाम्।

अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्विरवाप्यते॥१२.५॥

klēśō:'dhikatarastēṣāmayaktāsaktacētasām|

avyaktā hi gatirduḥkham̐ dēhavadbhiravāpyatē||12.5||

However, to remain steady in fixing one's attention on the Nirguna form of the Lord—a form that is beyond understanding and grasp of the mind as it has no known features and attributes—is a very difficult proposition for the ordinary person who is more at ease with things that have a physical existence, a definitive form and a known body. So this form of Nirguna Yoga (i.e. Nirguna form of worship) gives a lot of mental trouble and causes restlessness for the spiritual aspirant. (12.5)

[An ordinary man with an average intellect and knowledge finds it easy to relate to things he sees and experiences daily around him. So he would find worshipping the Saguna form of the Lord very convenient and easy as opposed to the Nirguna form.

For instance, not every student is comfortable with higher levels of mathematics or other technical branches such as chemistry or physics that seem too complicated to him, though he may not find such subjects as history, geography, biology, languages, arts etc. too difficult to handle. It is because his brain can't handle the complexities of mathematics or chemistry.

Similarly, an ordinary spiritual aspirant finds it too hard to relate to the Nirguna form of the Lord that goes beyond his comprehension; he becomes confused and loses focus. The exemplary level of dispassion, detachment, renunciation, self-control, knowledge of the Atma etc. that are required to obtain success in Nirguna Bhakti is not possible to attain by everyone. So any forced attempt to pursue this path of Nirguna Yoga or Nirguna Bhakti that is too difficult to handle for him leads to frustration and failure, and it is made all the worse because all peace of mind is lost.

So therefore, a spiritual aspirant is well advised to pursue the path of Saguna Yoga or Saguna Bhakti as it makes the spiritual journey enjoyable and success obtainable.

Love, devotion and faith in the visible form of the Lord God is the basic ingredient of Saguna Bhakti, while knowledge of the Truth, exemplary self-control of the senses and renunciation of the world and its temptations are the requirements for Nirguna Bhakti. This is what is meant in this verse.]

ये तु सर्वाणि कर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्पराः।
अनन्येनैव योगेन मां ध्यायन्त उपासते॥१२.६॥

तेषामहं समुद्धर्ता मृत्युसंसारसागरात्।
भवामि नचिरात्पार्थ मय्यावेशितचेतसाम्॥१२.७॥

yē tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi saṁnyasya matparāḥ।
ananyēnaiva yōgēna mām dhyāyanta upāsatē॥12.6॥

tēṣāmahaṁ samuddhartā mṛtyusaṁsārasāgarāt।
bhavāmi nacirātpārtha mayyāvēśitacētasām॥12.7॥

Oh Arjun (“pārtha”)! Those (devotees; Bhaktas) who are totally dependent on me and offer all their deeds to me (i.e. who do deeds but do not feel that they are the ones who are doing anything; who do deeds dispassionately and selflessly, and then offer me all the rewards that accrue due to such deeds), who are dedicated to me and faithfully worship and adore me by focusing all their attention exclusively upon me—verily indeed, I take up the responsibility of taking such devotees who have fixed their mind and attention on me across this vast ocean-like world of life and death (i.e. I grant their soul liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration; I provide them emancipation and salvation). (12.6 and 12.7)

[Like a child who depends solely upon its parents for protection and fulfillment of all needs, a devotee who depends entirely upon the Lord God is taken care of by the Lord; his spiritual welfare and destiny is ensured by the Lord himself.

An important point to note here is that while a self-realised and enlightened Nirguna Bhakta is so much submerged in meditation and contemplation upon the pure conscious Atma which is his ‘true self’ and pure consciousness that he remains detached from all activities related to this world, a prospect that is difficult to implement in practice, the Saguna Bhakta feels himself free to engage himself in carrying out the duties assigned to him in this life, but he does so without unduly getting perturbed by anything because he feels he is merely carrying out the orders of his Lord.

So a wise and enlightened Saguna Bhakta is one who takes special care not to get emotionally attached or involved in his actions and deeds, and he does everything with the mental view that he is merely carrying out the orders of his Lord. Therefore, he does not claim any reward for whatever effort he makes in doing his duties, for he is merely a servant of the Lord, a person who simply carries out the orders of his Master. This mental attitude frees his mind from all anxieties and expectations, giving him abiding peace and happiness. After all, what better reward would anyone wish in his life than to have an eternal sense of contentedness, peace, bliss and joy?

So therefore, this path of Saguna Bhakti becomes very easy and comfortable as compared to the path of Nirguna Bhakti.]

**मय्येव मन आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय।
निवसिष्यसि मय्येव अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशयः॥१२.८॥**

mayyēva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhiṁ nivēśaya|
nivasīṣyasi mayyēva ata ūrdhvaṁ na saṁśayaḥ||12.8||

[Lord Krishna exhorts Arjun—] Establish (fix) your Mana (mind, thoughts and heart) exclusively in me (the Lord God); and let your Buddhi (intellect) exclusively rely (depend) on me. There is indeed no doubt that if you do so (as advised by me), then you would deem to abide in me in a subtle form (i.e. it would be possible for you to become inseparable from me; you would be an image of me; there would be no difference between you and me). (12.8)

[The condition whereby a living being can become one with the Supreme Being is to fix one's mind, thought and emotions on the Lord. In this context refer to verse no. 2 which clearly stresses the important role of the mind for a spiritual aspirant's success in attaining oneness with the Lord God he worships.

If the mind is fixed to the world, the person lives in this world. If the mind is fixed on the Lord, the person lives with the Lord. A person's existence is where his mind is. His physical body may be present anywhere, but his actual presence is where his mind is. For instance, a student may be physically present in a classroom, but if his mind is wondering somewhere else he won't pay attention to what is being taught in the class, and this means he was as good as not being in the classroom at all.

Lord Krishna advises that a wise spiritual aspirant should remember the Lord God at all the time of his existence. So even while living in this mundane world and doing his duties, such a devotee would be deemed to living near his Lord because his mind and thought are fixed on the Lord. This is a practical way of doing 'Saguna Yoga'.

Remember: It is the mind that causes joy or grief to the creature. If the mind is away from the world and fixed on the Lord who is a personification of bliss, joy and beatitude, a person who practices this form of Yoga remains perpetually in a state of bliss, beatitude and contentedness inspite of being surrounded by a turbulent world churning endlessly in uncertainties, miseries and grief.]

**अथ चित्तं समाधातुं न शक्नोषि मयि स्थिरम्।
अभ्यासयोगेन ततो मामिच्छाप्तुं धनञ्जय॥१२.९॥**

atha cittam samādhātum na śaknōṣi mayi sthiram|
abhyāsayōgēna tatō māmicchāptum dhanañjaya||12.9||

Oh Arjun (dhanañjaya)! If you find it difficult to fix your mind naturally upon me (i.e. if you are not able to think of me at the higher level of consciousness and fix your mind on my sublime and subtle cosmic form, or even upon my visible form as you know it), then don't worry. You can achieve success in this form of Yoga by

practicing it, by diligently restraining yourself from involvement in worldly affairs, and by repeatedly diverting your mind towards me as soon as you discover that it has moved to any other thing in this world. (12.9)

[It is possible that fixing one's attention and thoughts on the Lord God may not come so naturally to all the spiritual aspirants. But there is nothing to worry about. Lord Krishna shows the way—and it is 'to practice it, to do it repeatedly'. If one is sincere in achieving success in any enterprise then he would stick to it despite initial failures. Practice makes a man perfect. So an aspirant is advised not to lose hope if he is not able to so easily fix his mind and attention on the Lord, and if he feels that the world keeps on distracting him. He should diligently follow the path of Bhakti Yoga by pulling his mind away from the world and all other things as soon as he becomes aware that his mind has drifted away, and then trying to fix the mind on the Lord by remembering the various divine stories of the Lord and his glories.

Slowly and steadily, this practice of fixing the mind on the Lord God by pulling it away from all other things would condition the mind in such a way that it would remain fixed to its new place. Even as a person can learn any difficult thing by repeatedly practicing it, a diligent spiritual aspirant would one day taste success if he practices to keep his mind and thoughts fixed on the Lord God.

The basic and simple idea here is that one should continue to practice fixing one's attention on the Lord God inspite of the fact that the mind does not remain focused on the Lord for long and would like to wander here and there. So as soon as the spiritual aspirant becomes aware that the mind has gone astray, as soon as he discovers that the attention is diverted somewhere else, he should consciously and diligently bring it back and fix it on the thoughts of the Lord.

Remember: The mind is constantly bombarded by various kinds of impulses that the physical body receives from the external world. So it becomes practically impossible for the mind to remain focused on the Lord and be neutral towards the world and its demands as it has the inherent responsibility of giving instructions to the body so that it can respond to these impulses. A living being cannot live in isolation and immune to doing deeds in a world that is characterized by activity. No activity leads to stagnation, and it is equivalent to death. Hence, the mind finds it very difficult to remain aloof from the world and calmly focus on the Lord as the mind is disturbed by the continuous need of the body for instructions in order to respond to the numerous demands of the world.]

अभ्यासेऽप्यसमर्थोऽसि मत्कर्मपरमो भव।

मदर्थमपि कर्माणि कुर्वन् सिद्धिमवाप्स्यसि॥१२.१०॥

abhyāsē:'pyasamarthō:'si matkarmaparamō bhava|

madarthamapi karmāṇi kurvan siddhimavāpsyasi||12.10||

[Lord Krishna continued—] In case you (Arjun) find it difficult to practice Yoga (as outlined in the previous verses), don't lose hope, for then there is another device by which you can attain me. You should then engage yourself in your routine life by

doing whatever you have to do, but do everything for my sake (and not to fulfil any of your own desires or to reach any of your own personal goals).

To wit, you should act dispassionately and do deeds without getting emotionally involved in them because you are doing them for me, for my sake and my pleasure, and not for your own self or for fulfilling any of your personal goals. (12.10)

[In case you find it hard to control your mind and focus it on me even by repeated practice because you find the mind is very stubborn and too difficult for you to harness, if you find that the mind continues to wander aimlessly in a fidgety manner inspite of your efforts to rein it in, and you discover that the mind is restless because the body won't let it rest in peace as the latter wishes to remain active and involved in fulfilling the numerous demands of life in this world for which it needs instructions from the mind—then there is another way by which the goal of attaining me (the Supreme Being) and becoming God-realised can be achieved. This method is very simple: It is to behave normally by doing your deeds in this world but to do them dispassionately and as a service to me. Then your mind would be serving me indirectly as its focus would be to keep you alert so that everything you do is being done for me and is being offered to me. Since doing things would keep both your mind and body engaged in some kind of activity, they won't find time to idle and think of mischief. The mind would be busy in directing the actions of the body, and since all these actions are aimed at serving me the mind would be focused in me in an indirect way.

Thut, this attitude, i.e. to do everything for God's sake and keep your self busy in doing deeds dispassionately, would help you in two ways—one, it will keep both your mind and body busy and give them no time to idle and create unwarranted mischief for you, and two, it will help you to maintain internal peace and contentedness which is a subtle sign of God-realisation.

Further, this attitude would help you to serve the Lord and become his 'Bhakta' (devotee) because selfless and diligent service to the Lord is also a sign of 'Bhakti' (devotion).]

अथैतदप्यशक्तोऽसि कर्तुं मद्योगमाश्रितः।

सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं ततः कुरु यतात्मवान्॥१२.११॥

athaitadapyaśaktō:'si kartuṁ madyōgamāśritaḥ|

sarvakarmaphalatyaḡaṁ tataḥ kuru yatātmavān||12.11||

Now, if you are unable to do anything for me or for my sake or to please me, then the next option for you is to develop the attitude of not expecting any result or reward from whatever you do.

To wit, you do your deeds as they come your way; do them and forget about them. Don't get emotionally involved in them, don't expect any reward or result from whatever you do. Do everything with a neutral mind and detached attitude.

By subduing your mind (which wants results from actions), relinquish all desires for getting fruits of your actions. (12.11)

[These are small steps, but they would go a long way in helping you ultimately focus your mind on me, the Supreme Being, and thereby attain oneness with me, for remember that a person is where his mind is.

This attitude will also help you overcome ‘Kaam’ or desires, and you must understand that Kaam is the root cause of worldly fetters. If you tide over Kaam, if you conquer your desires then you would have sailed comfortably over the rough ocean symbolized by this life of miseries, grief and worries. To wit, you will have attained joy, peace, bliss and beatitude that are obtained by being self-realised and God-realisation.

Remember: This is called ‘Niskaam Karma Yoga’—i.e. to bring about a union between the individual living being and the Supreme Being by doing deeds without having any desire for results, as the doer of these deeds does them for the sake of the Lord, for the Lord’s pleasue, as a service of the Lord, and therefore he neither wants nor expects to get any reward for himself like a true servant who simply obeys the orders of his master and remains unconcerned by the results of what he is asked to do by the master.]

श्रेयो हि ज्ञानमभ्यासाज्ज्ञानाद्ध्यानं विशिष्यते।

ध्यानात्कर्मफलत्यागस्त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम्॥१२.१२॥

śrēyō hi jñānamabhyāsājñānāddhyānam viśiṣyatē|

dhyānātkarmaphalatyāgastyāgācchāntiranantaram||12.12||

Truthful knowledge (gnosis) is better than practice; contemplation and meditation on the Lord God is better than acquisition of this knowledge; and not expecting any fruits or rewards from one’s actions (by doing them dispassionately and as an offering to the Lord) is better than meditation and contemplation because dispassionately done deeds would immediately produce an abiding sense of bliss, peace and beatitude for the doer. (12.12)

[To wit, having peace and happiness in life is, after all, the ultimate aim of all efforts that a living being makes in his life. All endeavours of a person are aimed at providing him with contentedness, peace, bliss, happiness and joy in life. If these are not achieved, all efforts are useless.

So therefore, if peace and happiness are not obtained even by acquisition of knowledge, or doing meditation and contemplation, then they are of no use for a spiritual aspirant. On the other hand, if one gets internal peace and happiness by doing deeds but not expecting any results from them, then this method would serve him better than any other spiritual methods. This latter method is practical to realize because all anxieties and worries come when one hopes to achieve success in his efforts and wishes to get some result out of his endeavours. In case he does not want any result then obviously he won’t be perturbed and unnecessarily disturbed about the outcome of his efforts. This means he gets peace and joy at the end of his efforts, especially when such efforts are done with a charitable attitude and as a service to the Lord God.

Hence, renunciation of all rewards or fruits of one's actions is the best way to experience spiritual success that is equivalent to self-realisation and God-realisation because one has great peace and happiness by doing deeds dispassionately and offering them to the Lord God, not expecting anything in return. Expecting something from one's actions fills the mind with continuous sense of anxiety that comes with having desires. If one wish is somehow fulfilled, another rears its head, and this becomes an endless cycle. No one can be certain that all his desires would be always fulfilled, and therefore he is perpetually in the grip of anxiety and uncertainties. Obviously, peace and happiness would elude this person.

In the beginning of this verse it said that 'truthful knowledge (gnosis) is better than practice' because it is truthful knowledge of the Lord that brings the spiritual aspirant closer to his Lord God. Say, what is the use of practicing anything if one is unable to acquire any success in it, or even after continuous practice one fails to learn anything of the subject he practices repeatedly.

From the metaphysical point of view, this 'truthful knowledge or gnosis' is about the awareness that the Lord's true form is pure consciousness, and that this consciousness is also known as the Atma or soul of all living beings. This Atma lives inside every living being as his 'true self', and therefore if one realizes this Atma then it is deemed that he has also realized the Lord God known as the 'Parmatma', the supreme Atma. So therefore, if a spiritual aspirant is able to experience the presence of the pure consciousness that resides in his own self, and if he knows that this consciousness is an image of the cosmic Consciousness that is personified by the Lord God he worships, then such a spiritual aspirant has indeed become one with the Lord. He has attained success in Yoga—i.e. he has successfully established oneness of his own self with the Lord God he worships.

Again, it is said in this verse that 'contemplation and meditation on the Lord God is better than acquisition of this knowledge'—well, what good is the theoretical knowledge of the existence pure consciousness that one acquires by studying the scriptures if one is unable to actually bring about oneness of his 'own self', his own Atma which is pure consciousness, with the 'supreme Self' known as the Parmatma who is an embodiment of the cosmic Consciousness? So it is said here that meditation and contemplation, or 'Yoga' and 'Dhyan' respectively, are better than mere acquisition of knowledge.

And finally it is concluded that the easiest and the best way to God-realisation for an ordinary man is to do deeds without expecting results. It is because a living being is accustomed to doing something or the other with his body and mind, for these two instruments available to him for any endeavour are known to be fidgety as they just can't sit idle.]

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च।

निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी॥१२.१३॥

सन्तुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः।

मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः॥१२.१४॥

advēṣṭā sarvabhūtānāṁ maitraḥ karuṇa ēva ca|

nirmamō nirahaṅkāraḥ samaduḥkhasukhaḥ kṣamī||12.13||

santuṣṭaḥ satataṁ yōgī yatātmā dr̥dhaniścayaḥ|

mayyarpitamanōbuddhiryō madbhaktaḥ sa mē priyaḥ||12.14||

[In the following eight verses, Lord Krishna outlines the attributes of a Bhakta, a devotee of the Lord God.]

He who has no malice and ill-will towards any living being, he who is a friend of all, he who has compassion and mercy in him, he who has no attachment with or infatuation for anyone or anything (i.e. he is free from the concept of I and mine), he who is free from pride and ego, he who treats fortunes and misfortunes alike and remains balanced in mind during joy and grief (i.e. he who always remains calm and unmoved under all circumstances), he who is forgiving by his inherent nature [13], ---

---He who is always contented and satisfied, he who is eternally focused on me and keeps his mind united with me (i.e. he who remains perpetually in a state of Yoga, always doing meditation in the sense that his mind is ever-focused on me; he who lives in the transcendental state of consciousness), he who has controlled his mind, sub-conscious and thoughts as well as his sense organs and body, he who is firm in his resolve, belief, conviction and faith (in me), and he who has unconditionally and completely submitted himself, his mind and intellect before me—verily indeed, such a devotee of mine is very dear to me [14]. (13-14)

[The salient feature of the characteristics of a devotee of God who is dear to the Lord as described here is that he is wise and enlightened, and he possesses excellent character traits as listed in the verse.

Remember: Only a person who has risen above a mundane existence, he who has become wise and enlightened enough to know the metaphysical truth that the Atma or the pure consciousness is the only reality in this living world and it is the only identity of all living beings, that the gross physical world is not true and it is transient and perishable, that true peace comes when one has distanced one's self from all delusions associated with this material world and instead focus one's attention on the Truth of existence in the form of Lord God who embodies pure consciousness that is an eternal source of bliss, beatitude and felicity—only such a person can exhibit the stellar character traits as listed in this verse.

Surely enough, such a devotee would be dear to the Lord God.

One subtle advice given in this verse is this: a wise person should have no attachment with the gross world and those who are ignorant of the Truth, but he should be devoted to the Lord God and have affection for him because the Lord is an embodiment of truth, knoweldge, bliss and consciousness. Going by the adage that one becomes like the company one keeps, a devotee who keeps a constant company of the Lord God becomes one like the Lord; he begins to reflect the glory of the Lord; he becomes an image of the Lord and his divine qualities.

Another advice is this: to be firm and stable in one's convictions and faith. This is important as it helps a person to reach his goal in life in a determined manner, with steady steps and quiet mind. Otherwise he would be like a boat adrift on a

turbulent river, getting tossed and turned by so many advises and options all of which seem good and correct. Fickleness leads to no where.

The third advice is: to be contented. If one is not contented, then no matter how much of anything he gets, or how much of any success he finds, he would continue to yearn for more and remain agitated. Remember: desires and wants are like the horizon—the more you try to reach them the further away they move from you.

The fourth advice is: to be forgiving and friendly towards all. If one was to develop this attitude, he won't have any enemy in the world, and life would be a living heaven right here on earth. Forgiveness and amiable nature are one of the most excellent characters that a person can possess.]

यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः।

हर्षामर्षभयोद्वेगैर्मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः॥१२.१५॥

yasmānnōdvijatē lōkō lōkānnōdvijatē ca yaḥ|

harṣāmarṣabhayōdvēgairmuktō yaḥ sa ca mē priyaḥ||12.15||

He who is not a source of annoyance or vexation for anyone, nor does he himself feel vexed or upset by others—a person who practices an exemplary level of equanimity and fortitude in as much as he is free from the emotions of joy and sorrow, delight and indignation, fear and vexation, agitation and intolerance and other such turbulent emotions, is indeed very dear to me. (12.15)

[These virtues are an extension of what has already been said in the two previous verse nos. 13-14. If one has a friendly and amiable attitude, if one treats everyone equally, if one has forgiveness and equanimity, if one remains detached mentally from all attachments and is fixed on the thoughts of the Lord God—then obviously he would be calm and peaceful. Such a wise and pious person would not feel offended by anyone, nor would his behaviour offend any creature.

Remember: It is the mind that is the seat of all restlessness; it is the mind that feels annoyed or happy. If the mind is steady, controlled and fixed on the Lord God by doing meditation, there is no reason why the creature would get agitated.

To wit, the Lord loves those persons who have a calm and peaceful mind.]

अनपेक्षः शुचिर्दक्ष उदासीनो गतव्यथः।

सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः॥१२.१६॥

anapēkṣaḥ śucirdakṣa udāsīnō gatavyathaḥ|

sarvārambhaparityāgī yō madbhaktaḥ sa mē priyaḥ||12.16||

He who wants or expects nothing (i.e. who wants no rewards from his deeds; who has no desires; who lusts for nothing), he who is pure internally as well as externally (i.e. whose mind and heart are pure, and whose external behaviour and deeds are holy and

pious), he who wise and clever (i.e. who is enlightened and self-realised), he who is impartial, dispassionate and detached (i.e. who practices renunciation), he who does not feel grief or sorrow nor any kind of mental and emotional distraction or agitation (i.e. who practices equanimity, tolerance and fortitude), and he who does not involve himself in initiating any action or deed (because, being wise and enlightened, he knows that he is not doing anything himself but it is the Lord who is driving him to do what the Lord wants to be done through him, and that he is merely a tool)—verily, such a Bhakta (devotee) is very dear to me. (12.16)

[‘Not expecting anything’, ‘doing deeds dispassionately’, ‘offering all deeds and their fruits to the Lord God’, and ‘practicing renunciation, detachment and dispassion’ are saying the same thing in different ways.

A true devotee wants nothing from the world. His only wish is to attain the Lord and become one with him. Now, this wish—‘of attaining the Lord and becoming one with him’—is a highly pious, spiritually pure and divine wish of the soul, and only a seeker of Truth would think this way. This eclectic and noble wish that relates to the ultimate liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation of the soul cannot be said to be equivalent to any other wish that is related to the gross mundane world and mortal existence.

A true devotee of the Lord is indifferent to the mundane world and its activities, remaining aloof from everything. Hence he is calm and unruffled. His mind is peaceful and meditating on the Lord’s form that is has a physical divine form as well as a subtle and sublime form that is nothing but pure cosmic Consciousness.]

यो न हृष्यति न द्वेष्टि न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।

शुभाशुभपरित्यागी भक्तिमान्यः स मे प्रियः॥१२.१७॥

yō na hr̥syati na dvēṣṭi na śōcati na kāṅkṣati |

śubhāśubhaparit̥yāgī bhaktimānyaḥ sa mē priyaḥ||12.17||

He who is calm, unruffled and unmoved so much so that he neither feels joy and delight, nor sorrows and grief of any kind, who harbours no malice or envy, who has no expectations of any kind, who treats fortunes and misfortunes equally and with equanimity, evenness of mind and fortitude, and who possesses the great spiritual asset of devotion and love for me—verily indeed, such a devotee is very dear to me. (12.17)

[This verse can be read as follows also: “He who neither rejoices nor hates, he who neither grieves nor delights, he who has no desires whatsoever, he who renounces both the good and the evil actions, and he who becomes fully devoted to me—verily indeed, he is very dear to me”.

A similar idea is expressed in ‘Narad Bhakti Sutra’, verse no. 5. The entire text of ‘Narad Bhakti Sutra’ is included in our Book in Chapter no. 6

We observe that verse nos. 16 and 17 are closely related to each other. The mental and emotional conditions mentioned in these verses are possible only when a wise

spiritual aspirant realizes or experiences the presence of the Lord inside his own self in the form of pure consciousness. This means he has reached a state of transcendental existence where the only awareness that he has is that of the 'pure consciousness'. Since the Lord God is an embodiment of cosmic Consciousness, a realized aspirant feels the presence of the Lord right within him. The Lord is an embodiment of bliss, beatitude and felicity; he is joy and happiness personified.

So a God-realised and a self-realised person (devotee) has no reason to be moved by joy or sorrow. Since such a person treats all living beings as an image of the Lord. Therefore, he harbours malice and ill-will with no one.

Living beyond the gross level of this mundane existence, i.e. living in the transcendental plane of existence, he remains aloof from all existential distractions and disturbances that have their root in this mundane, gross and mortal world.]

समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः।

शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः॥१२.१८॥

तुल्यनिन्दारस्तुतिर्मौनी सन्तुष्टो येन केनचित्।

अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान्मे प्रियो नरः ॥१२.१९॥

samaḥ śatrau ca mitrē ca tathā mānāpamānayōḥ|

śītōṣṇasukhaduḥkhēṣu samaḥ saṅgavivarjitah||12.18||

tulyanindāstutirmaunī santuṣṭō yēnakēnacit|

anikētaḥ sthiramatirbhaktimānmē priyō naraḥ ||12.19||

He who treats a friend and a foe alike, he who treats honours and insults or praises and reproaches equally, he who remains calm and balanced in mind in sorrow or joy, in heat or cold, in pleasure and pain or all other contradictory situations and contrary experiences (that would normally cause immense perplexity and emotional disturbance for a person), he who is free from all attachments and longings, he who spends his time in contemplation and meditation, he who is always contented with whatever comes his way and is satisfied with whatever means of sustenance he has, he who does not entertain any sense of possession or ownership of any worldly assets such as a home—verily indeed, such a Bhakta is very dear to me. (12.18 and 12.19)

[It will be noted that all these virtues are manifestations of the basic idea that a true devotee of Lord God sees his Lord everywhere, in each person, and in all places and situations. With the loving Lord everywhere around to help him each moment of his life, there is no question of a devotee getting perturbed at any development. So he remains calm and poised even during the most daring of adversities.

Further, he knows that the world is transient, perishable and gross, that it is full of delusions and grief. So what sense would it make to long for such a world? On the other hand, the Lord is a fountain-head of bliss and delight, so it makes real sense to love the Lord rather than the world which gives only sorrow and pain.]

ये तु धर्म्यामृतमिदं यथोक्तं पर्युपासते।
श्रद्धधाना मत्परमा भक्तास्तेऽतीव मे प्रियाः॥१२.२०॥

yē tu dharmyāmṛtamidaṁ yathōktaṁ paryupāsatē|
śraddadhānā matparamā bhaktāstē'tīva mē priyāḥ||12.20||

Anyone who imbibes the symbolic sweet nectar of immense spiritual wisdom (i.e. anyone who follows the advice about the eclectic spiritual principles of Bhakti) that has been outlined by me in the discourse given herein above with a firm conviction and faith, and those who are solely devoted to me—verily indeed, I love such Bhaktas very dearly; they are very dear to me. (12.20)'

[In this Canto no. 12 of Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, Lord Krishna has succinctly enumerated all the glorious virtues of a 'Bhakta' as well as the principles that govern 'Bhakti'.]

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Bhakti Sutra Mala

The Devotional Path to God-Realisation

[Roman Transliteration of Text, English Exposition, Elaborate Notes on
Ram Charit Manas; Dohawali; Adhyatma Ramayan;
Tripadvibhut Maharnaryan Upanishad; Krishna's Geeta—canto 12;
Narad Bhakti Sutra & Shandilya Bhakti Sutra]

Chapter 6

‘Narad Bhakti Sutra’

The “Narad Bhakti Sutra” is an excellent treatise on the spiritual philosophy of ‘Bhakti’ that is attributed to the great celestial sage Narad who is regarded as an expert in this field and the greatest exponent of devotion and love for the Lord God. It can also be called a ‘Book of Spiritual Advice as taught by sage Narad’.

Narad’s “Bhakti Sutra” is an excellent Book of Aphorisms that succinctly pinpoint the key principles that act as a guide for an aspirant who wishes to attain spiritual blessedness, a sense of eternal bliss and joy that is obtained by self and God realisation. ‘Bhakti’ is a devotional path to God that creates an unbreakable bond of love and affection between the devotee and his beloved Lord so much so that no distinction remains between the two of them. These aphorisms describe the philosophy of love and devotion for Lord God in a very concise and precise manner.

The word ‘Sutra’ means a ‘key’, a ‘code’, an ‘aphorism’, a ‘formula’, a ‘principle’. A ‘Sutra’ when applied to any body of knowledge refers to a basic formula or the key principle by understanding which one can easily grasp the wider body of knowledge. Here that knowledge pertains to how ‘Bhakti’ (devotion and love) for Lord God can be practiced, what its many variants are, what are the pitfalls to be guarded against, and what its spiritual rewards are. A ‘Sutra’ is an indicator of something of profound importance and great significance. A wise man’s effort should be to understand what that indication is; he must look for the spiritual goal that Bhakti points to and leads to.

All learners need an easy to read and understand guide-book to help them grasp the essentials of the subject of their interest. Similarly on the spiritual path too an aspirant would need guidelines and a road map to show him the correct way forward, to tell him what to do in order to achieve success in his spiritual endeavours and warn him against the various pitfalls and how to avoid them, to provide him with some benchmarks against which he can judge his success, and at the same time tell him the wonderful reward that awaits him if he follows the instructions properly.

In the spiritual realm, Bhakti (devotion and love) for Lord God is of tremendous and singular importance. There are scriptures that deal with this eclectic

spiritual theme, but they are so many of them, so vastly scattered and voluminous, and so varied in their contents and different in their prescriptions that a devotee is more likely to get confused and lost in the maze of advices given by them than actually be able to benefit from reading them. The present book “Narad Bhakti Sutra” fulfills this necessity—as it presents the guidelines of Bhakti in a very precise and concise form in a language that is easy to understand.

The word ‘Sutra’ also means a ‘thread’. Hence, ‘Narad Bhakti Sutra’ is like a garland of salutary spiritual wisdom consisting of the many beads symbolized by the excellent practical advice given by sage Narad to all spiritual aspirants who seek the nectar of eternal happiness, joy, peace, bliss and beatitude, and these beads of spiritual wisdom have been threaded together using an easy medium of having the purest and the truest form of ‘love’ for Lord God, a method that everyone can access and easily practice. The additional bonus that the spiritual seeker gets is attainment of liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation for his soul. This is achieved by following the path of Bhakti, i.e. the path of submission, devotion, love and faith in Lord God, the path that requires no formalities and rituals, a path that is absolutely easy to follow, and a path that grants the fruit that is difficult for even great sages and ascetics to obtain by practicing other spiritual methods advised in the scriptures.

These fundamental principles related to ‘Bhakti for God’ were first propounded by the celestial sage Narad. Hence they are named after him. Narad was the ‘Manas-Putra’, i.e. mind-born son of the creator Brahma, and was the greatest exponent of Bhakti. So therefore, he was well qualified and competent to expound upon this spiritual theme. Though there are many other scriptural texts dealing with Bhakti, but Narad’s Bhakti Sutra stands out amongst them by its precision, brevity, clarity, matter-of-fact and easy-to-remember style.

Narad’s ‘Bhakti Sutra’ fulfills the six basic characteristic qualities for any formula to be excellent and practicable—viz, it is easy to understand and remember as it is clear and unambiguous, it gives complete information on Bhakti, it is succinct, concise and aphoristic, it contains the essence of the matter presented in a beautiful manner, it has a universal application and covers the entire theme by not leaving anything out of its ambit, and it is irrefutable in as much as its veracity and effectiveness cannot be challenged.

‘Narad Bhakti Sutra’—literally meaning the fundamental formula or ‘Sutra’ that defines what comprises devotion for Lord God as enunciated by sage Narad who was one of the greatest devotees of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being—is a treatise on Bhakti that is succinct, precise, easy to understand, and is universally respected as being one of the best spiritual guides in its genre of scriptural literature. It has only 84 Sanskrit verses.

Now, the question that naturally arises is ‘What is ‘Bhakti’? Simply put, it is the devotional path to God-realisation. It entails having a deep and steady sense of devotion, love and affection for the Lord, to worship and revere the Lord most sincerely, to submit oneself completely to the Lord, to selflessly serve the Lord devotedly and enthusiastically, and to rely on the Lord exclusively for all the needs that one may have in this world, whether such needs pertain to existential life or to fulfil one’s spiritual quest. Hence, Bhakti is complete commitment on the part of the Bhakta (the practitioner of Bhakti) towards his Lord God, and it is a personal affair between the Bhakta and the Lord.

Like any other spiritual practice such as Yoga (meditation), Dhyan (contemplation), Tapa (penance and austerity), Japa (repetition of the holy name of the Lord), Yagya (religious sacrifices) etc., 'Bhakti' has its own unique and excellent rewards. What makes Bhakti special is that it is easy and convenient to practice, and it is very dear to the Lord himself. The Lord takes care of the practitioner of Bhakti, the 'Bhakta', himself like a parent taking care of his or her infant child. On the other hand, the practitioner of Yoga, the 'Yogi', is like an adult child who is able to take care of himself, though of course the parent, the Lord God, is always available to help the Yogi should the latter need it.

Another salient and remarkable feature of Narad's Bhakti Sutra is that it explains the Philosophy of Love and expounds upon the True Nature of Love in a succinct manner, especially when it cites the example of love that the Gopis (the female devotees of Vrindavan) had for Lord Krishna (verse nos. 21-24) in the context of the love that a devotee has for his or her beloved Lord God. True love is one that is selfless, it is a giver of joy, when one cheerfully sacrifices everything for the sake of the beloved, where there is bliss, ecstasy and elation but no trace of guilt or fear, and which is so profound and deep that with the passage of time it gets more and more robust and abiding.

Sage 'Narad' was the mind-born son of the creator Brahma. He was so deeply committed to Bhakti that wherever he went he got immediate respect, and whomsoever he preached was influenced by his wisdom and enlightened views on Bhakti—i.e. the path that showed the listener the way to God-realisation. He had even antagonized his own brother Daksha Prajapati by teaching his children the path of Bhakti so much so that all of them renounced the world and became Sanyasis (one who renounces all attachment with the world). Daksha became so annoyed that he cursed Narad that he would not be able to stay at one place for long, and that is why Narad roamed in the world endlessly. But this curse proved to be a boon for all living beings in this mortal world as well as the dwellers in the world hereafter—because Narad spread spiritual cheer and bliss by preaching the good word of love, devotion, faith and submission for the Lord wherever he went, giving one and all the message of liberation and deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death with its accompanying pain and miseries.

Narad committed a mistake once due to which he had to take birth as a maid-servant's son, but he did penance as a means of repentance, and was rewarded by a divine glimpse of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being. But the Lord vanished soon, filling Narad's heart longing for more. So the sages advised him to do more penance and develop a strong sense of devotion for the Lord he loved exceedingly. Then onwards, Narad moved around in this creation, constantly singing the Lord's holy name with the help of a musical instrument known as the 'Veena' (Indian lute) and glorifying the Lord.

'Narad Bhakti Sutra' consists of 84 Sanskrit verses that are precise and succinct, making it easy for a person to recall them during spiritual discussions and discourses. Now let us summarise the contents of this 'Sutra' as follows:-

It says that the easiest (verse no. 58) and the best instrument for God-realisation (verse no. 80, 81) is 'Bhakti' because it gives the spiritual fruit or reward for which a person does any auspicious effort in the first place (verse no. 26, 30).

Bhakti is superior to Gyan (knowledge), to Yoga (meditation), to Karma (rituals and religious observances), and other spiritual traditions (verse no. 25).

Bhakti is a complete and wholesome way to attain self and god realisation; it needs no other support or help (verse no. 59).

Bhakti gives eternal peace and bliss of the highest order (verse no. 60).

Bhakti is divided into two aspects—(i) Paraa Bhakti, and (ii) A-paraa Bhakti. The A-paraa Bhakti is divided further into (a) Gauna Bhakti, and (b) Mukhya Bhakti.

The Paraa Bhakti is the aim of spiritual practice, while the A-paraa Bhakti is a means to achieve success in it.

Paraa Bhakti is attainment of extreme and eternal bliss obtained upon God-realisation which is equivalent to self-realisation because the Parmatma, the Supreme Soul and the cosmic Spirit, is the same as the individual's Atma or his own soul. It is like nectar, and gives immortality and supreme form of bliss (verse nos. 2 and 3); it helps eliminate worldly desires and temptations (verse no. 7).

The A-paraa Bhakti involves some methods to make this possible—such as having interest in worshipping the Lord (verse no. 16), having desire and interest in listening to the stories associated with the Lord (verse no. 17), to be engrossed in the thoughts of the 'self' or the Atma (verse no. 18), surrendering all deeds to the Lord and always remembering him (verse no. 19).

But it must be noted that Gyan or truthful knowledge of the reality is also conducive to attaining nearness or oneness with God (verse no. 28). In other words, Gyan and Bhakti go hand in hand; they aid each other instead of constracting one another (verse no. 29).

Bhakti is the only way that leads to Mukti—liberation and deliverance from this world of transmigration leading to permanent rest for the soul (verse no. 33). Bhakti helps one to break free from the shackling effects of this deluding and entrapping world (verse no. 33).

The methods by which Bhakti can be established and made to bloom in one's heart are narrated in verse nos. 34-42 as follows—to abandon attachments to material sense objects and sensual pleasures of this world, to desist from self gratification of the sense organs (verse no. 35), to do Bhajan—or the constant remembrance of the Lord, his divine name and divine deeds (verse nos. 36, 79), to hear and sing the divine stories, the virtues and the holy name of the Lord along with others in the community (verse no. 37), to have contact and communion with holy men such as great saints (verse no. 38-39, 42) which is obtained when the Lord is kind (verse no. 40), to treat true devotees of the Lord as being equivalent to the Lord himself (verse no. 41), to offer all the deeds and their fruits or rewards to the Lord (verse no. 61) along with any trace of negativity such as desires, anger, pride etc. that may still linger on (verse no. 65), and in general doing everything that is auspicious and holy which makes it possible for him to enhance his level of Bhakti (verse no. 76).

Other aids to Bhakti are the following—Abandonment of the feeling of worldly happiness and joy on the one hand, and of sorrow, misery and grief on the other hand, eliminating any sort of desires and passions such as for gain or profit of any kind, and to be careful not to waste a single moment and be prepared for death that may come any time (verse no. 77). Practicing the virtues of 'Ahinsaa' (non-violence), 'Satya' (truthfulness), 'Shaucha' (cleanliness and purity), 'Dayaa' (mercy and compassion), and 'Aastikta' (belief in God and the Holy Spirit as well as the teaching of the scriptures) etc. (verse no. 78).

The main obstacle in Bhakti is bad company (verse no. 43), as well as Kaam (wordly desires and passions), Krodh (anger) and Moha (infatuations, attachments,

delusions, entanglements) that lead to Smriti-bhransa (failure to remember the horrible consequences of committing sins and getting entangled in the world), Buddhi-naash (destruction of intelligent thinking and wisdom), and Sarwa-naash (complete ruin) (verse no. 44).

Maya (the web of delusions so characteristic of this world) is a great obstacle and it is overcome only by detachment from all things (verse no. 46). Other methods of overcoming Maya are to live a serene life away from the world (verse no. 67), to break all worldly fetters and bondages, to become neutral by rising above the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama, and to discard attempts to acquire and then worry about the protection of worldly possessions (verse no. 47), to not bother about the fruits of one's deeds and labour but do one's duty as ordained by destiny, peacefully and stoically (verse no. 48), and to abandon even the Vedas (excessive study of the scriptures once the basic knowledge and guidance has been obtained) and become free from all doubts, confusions, perplexities and consternations (verse no. 49).

One must also avoid the following—talking about or remembering anything pertaining to women, material wealth (verse no. 63), futile debates, controversies, arguments, idle talks and hearsay that create doubts in the mind about the truth of the Holy Spirit, talks about one's enemies or those who are unfavourable—because all these things unnecessarily create vexation for the spirit (verse no. 74); negative characters such as Abhimaan and Dambha (pride and arrogance accompanied by deceit, conceit, hypocrisy and pretensions) etc. (verse no. 64); getting involved in worthless debates and arguments (verse no. 74).

The 'Gauna' (silent, subtle form of) Bhakti is like a dumb man attempting to describe some delicious food (verse no. 52)—i.e. it is a silent form of devotion for the Lord which has no external signs. Here, the devotee sips the nectar of spiritual bliss that comes with self and god realisation without showing any signs of his spiritual enlightenment. It can be experienced and never be described; nothing more remains to be attained or desired for after that (verse no. 54).

The 'Gauna Bhakti' is of three types (verse no. 56)—(i) Saatvika, (ii) Raajsik, and (iii) Taamsik. These are also called 'Aarta-bhakti', 'Arthaaartha-bhakti', and 'Jigyaasu-bhakti'. Gauna Bhakti is easy because it does not require any effort as it is done directly by having natural love for the God that arises in one's heart. It leads to internal peace and bliss (verse nos. 58-60).

A true and sincere devotee of the Lord acquires a holy aura around him which makes him effuse divinity and holiness similar to the Lord, thereby making their presence beneficial for the whole world around them (verse no. 68-71). Like the universality and oneness of the Supreme Being, Supreme Spirit, the Supreme Truth and the Supreme Reality, such realised devotees of the Lord have no distinction as to their caste, religion, knowledge, physical form, birth, level of worldly prosperity or poverty, or the type of deeds done by them—because they have risen above such mundane considerations (verse no. 72-73).

The 11 types of devotees of the Lord—Narad Bhakti Sutra, verse no. 82 outlines the eleven forms of Bhakti, which are actually variations of the same virtue of Bhakti because their main objective is the same—to develop devotion and love for the Lord God which lead to spiritual bliss, to liberation of the soul from worldly delusions and miseries, and to attain oneness of the individual's soul with the Supreme Soul of creation so that the cycle of birth and death is terminated for good. They are as follows:—(i) Guna and Mahatmya of the Lord—this involves narrating, singing and generally propagating the glories of the Lord and his divine virtues; (ii) Rupa—this involves remembering the divine form of the Lord and worshipping this

form; (iii) Pooja—this involves offering of formal forms of worship to the Lord; (iv) Smaran—constantly and always remembering the Lord; (v) Daasya—to become a humble servant of the Lord; to serve the Lord with great simplicity and humility, not expecting anything in return; to be ever eager to do anything which would please the Lord; (vi) Sakhya—to treat the Lord as one’s close friend and companion; (vii) Kanta—to honour the divine radiance of the Lord, and visualize that the Lord’s radiance shining on one’s self as the light of the sun; (viii) Vaatsalya—to love the Lord dearly as one loves one’s children; (ix) Atma-nivedan—to submit one’s self to the Lord; to pray to the Lord internally; to treat one’s Atma as a fraction of the Supreme Atma represented by the Lord God; (x) Tanmayataa—to remain perpetually engrossed in the thoughts of the Lord and to remain lost in the bliss derived from it; and (xi) Param-viraha—to suffer gravely due to separation from the Lord just like a lover remains submerged in grief if his loved one is separated from him.

Finally, Narad Bhakti Sutra lists some of the great devotees of the Lord as follows—Sanat-kumars, Veda-vyas, Shukdeo, Shandilya, Garga, Vishnu, Kaundinya, Shesh, Uddhav, Aaruni, Bali, Hanuman, Vibhishan, etc. (verse no. 83).

Now, we shall read the full Text of ‘NARAD BHAKTI SUTRA’ in detail:

१ अथातो भक्तिं व्याख्यास्यामः

1 athāto bhaktim vyākhyāsyāmah

(1) Now therefore, I (Narad) shall try to explain (expound upon) the nature of ‘Bhakti’ (devotion for Lord God).

[The word ‘therefore’ (athāto) here starts the teaching of Narad, and it clearly means that he had expounded upon other spiritual philosophies before he finally decided to explain the principles related to Bhakti, because this was his favourite theme. So ‘athāto’ marks the beginning of the preaching of Narad’s Bhakti Sutra.

Narad knew by experience that all knowledge was useless unless the creature can develop love and devotion for Lord God. He had realized that the best and the easiest way to attain bliss and happiness in one’s life is to have Bhakti for the Lord God. So now he embarks on sharing his spiritual knowledge and experience to all other living beings like a benevolent teacher should do.

He elaborates on the divine path of Bhakti that leads the creature to God-realisation, i.e. the path of devotion and love for the Lord that brings the creature closer to him, and finally helps him to establish oneness with the Lord. So it’s a path of action, a path that needs action by way of making all-out efforts to serve and please the Lord in the best way the devotee can.

Hence, during this discussion, Narad expounds on what constitutes Bhakti, and the means to be successful in Bhakti.

What was the need for Narad to ‘explain’ the concept of Bhakti as it looks plain and simple on the surface—for it simply means to have devotion for Lord God? Well, surely, Narad must have felt that this eclectic spiritual theme has been widely misunderstood and misinterpreted. Classical texts dealing with Bhakti are so many and varied and huge in size that they leave scope for interpolations and misrepresentation of its meaning and practice. So it was the need of the hour to sort

out the mess and make things easy, clear and to the point in a way that Bhakti can be properly and correctly understood, free from errors arising from misinterpretations and misunderstandings, and then can be easily put to practice.

The importance of Bhakti has been highlighted in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 11/26/30, where the Lord has said: “What else remains to be achieved by a pious soul who has attained devotion (Bhakti) for me, who am endowed with endless virtues, is the ultimate cause of all, and an embodiment of absolute spiritual Truth, cosmic Consciousness and eternal Bliss.”

Again, in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 1/2/6, it is said: “The supreme spiritual aim of the Jiva, the living being, should be to develop Bhakti (devotion) for the Lord God. It ought to be done in a selfless manner, and with no expectation. It is the only way that leads to complete contentedness of the ‘self’, the pure conscious soul.”

Narad sought to erase all confusions and doubts about Bhakti by explaining it concisely and in simple terms.]

२ सा त्व् अस्मिन् परमप्रेमरूपा

2 sã tv asmin parama-prema-rũpã

(2) That (Bhakti; devotion) indeed takes the form of supreme love for Him (the Lord God). [This love is transcendental in nature, and it has an ethereal and sublime form. It is the truest and the purest form that ‘love’ can take. Loving the Lord is another way of saying that the devotee worships his beloved Lord and adores him through the medium of complete devotion for him. The loving devotee is completely committed to serving the Lord and doing everything within his means to please the Lord he loves so dearly.]

[Now, the first principle of Bhakti is to have ‘supreme love’ for the Lord God. There is no doubt in it—“sã tv asmin”.

The word ‘param’ means the highest form of love; the love that transcends boundaries of the gross mortal existence; love that is ethereal and sublime. ‘Param’ means a state where all comparisons end. Hence, Bhakti refers to the sort of love of God which is incomparable in this world. It is also not subjected to any conditions—i.e. it is selfless and undiluted; it is limitless and everlasting; it never diminishes under any circumstance. This love is genuine, deep and unwavering.

The Bhakta does not expect anything in return for this love of God because this love is of a ‘selfless’ kind. But the Lord is so gracious by nature and so grateful to the Bhakta that he duly reciprocates his love by loving the Bhakta more than anything and anyone else in this world. Nay, the Lord even loves his devotee more than his ownself because if someone offends the Lord the offender would be forgiven instantly, but if he offends the Lord’s true Bhakta then there is no respite from the Lord’s wrath. This universal truth was reiterated even by the preceptor the Gods in epic Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 218.

Narad talks about Bhakti as a manifestation of one’s true love and affection for Lord God. As it has been observed herein above, when one loves the Lord dearly, the Lord too reciprocates his love. So this starts the process of mutual love for each

other—the devotee loves his Lord God, and the Lord loves his devotee. This bond is so strong and resolute that it cannot be compromised and broken under the greatest of adversities. Love brings the two, the devotee and the Lord, closer to each other. This is the essence of Bhakti; it is the means by which Bhakti can bear fruits. Developing ‘Pure Love’ for God is a mean by which the devotee comes closer to his object of affection, which is the Lord God.

The ‘love’ that Narad refers to is ‘supreme love’, the love of a transcendental kind, the love that is sublime and ethereal in nature, and not a love that is of a gross kind and has negative connotation attached with physical world. This ‘supreme love’ for Lord God relates to the natural affinity that is established between the creature’s own Atma, his pure conscious soul that symbolises his true ‘self’, and the Parmatma, the supreme Atma which is the cosmic universal Soul representing pure Consciousness. The grossness of the physical body has no role to play in this ‘supreme form of love’ that Bhakti requires.

It ought to be noted here that Narad refers to God as ‘in this one’—“*sā tv asmin*”. This clearly indicates that Narad is referring to the supreme reality of the Lord as being a personification of the cosmic Consciousness that is also present inside the living being as his Atma or soul. The phrase “in this one” clearly implies a form of the Lord that is adored and worshipped by the devotee himself, for the Lord has a universal form that can be adopted by the individual devotee in accordance with his likings and in a way he would prefer to worship and adore his Lord God. Narad does not teach about a specific form of the Lord God for which a spiritual aspirant must develop Bhakti; the devotee is free to choose the form of the Lord God that he would like to have devotion for.

Hence, Bhakti is a matter of having love for a form of the Lord God that is a personal choice of the Bhakta, the person who practices Bhakti. Obviously one would feel natural love for an entity that one likes in a natural way, and not for an entity that has been imposed upon him by someone else.

This natural love for Lord God is free from all desires and it does not even need any knowledge of the scriptures. It springs spontaneously in one’s heart like a fountain, and then it grows like a creeper to embrace the entire being of the creature so much so that the creature remains ever absorbed in the thoughts of the Lord, and he remains aloof from everything that is unrelated to the Lord. Obviously this is the same state of existence that is attained in the higher states of Yoga (meditation). In this transcendental state everything dissolves, and only the object of love and adoration—i.e. Lord God—remains.

Remember: All ‘love’ is not ‘Bhakti’. For instance, when we say ‘I love a book, or a sweet, or some person, or some place, or some music’, surely it is not Bhakti at all. When we say ‘I love God’ then it hints at Bhakti, but real Bhakti is when this ‘love for God’ is deep, true, sincere and honest, and not pretentious and deceitful.

A Bhakta also has deep and abiding faith in his Lord God. This faith, like the love, is also supreme in nature; it never gets diminished.

Now, it is natural for a person to love an entity that is the source of joy and happiness for him. He would love that entity only if he trusts that he would get delight and happiness by doing so. Hence, true love for God would happen only when one has firm faith that the Lord is the one who would give him ‘eternal and the highest’ form of joy, peace, happiness, bliss and beatitude. That is why the love for God has been defined as ‘param’ or supreme in this verse.

In this ‘supreme form of love’, the lover and the beloved become inseparable from one another. Well, a wise reader would immediately see the link between Bhakti

and Yoga here: The main aim of Yoga is to establish oneness between the individual's Atma, his soul that is pure consciousness, and the supreme Atma or Soul represented by the universal Cosmic Consciousness. When this happens, the practitioner of Yoga experiences ecstasy and bliss of an ethereal kind; he loses awareness of his surrounding and even of his own gross body. Similarly, a Bhakta too feels exhilarated and ecstatic in his love for the Lord God so much so that he loses awareness of the world around him as well as of his own self.

This state of transcendental existence is drenched in bliss and ecstasy, and is therefore like a bee which remains lost in joy while drinking nectar of a flower. This is reiterated in the next verse no. 3 herein below.]

३ अमृतस्वरूपा च

3 amṛta-svarūpā ca

(3) This 'love and devotion' (Bhakti for Lord God) is nectarean by its inherent nature; it is like pure and undiluted nectar (that bestows eternity of bliss to the drinker). {Verily, this love and devotion for the Lord is an eternal source of bliss and joy for the Bhakta.}

[Bhakti grants bliss and joy of an immortal dimension. Like a bee which forgets about everything while it drinks the nectar of a flower, a Bhakta forgets about everything else in his love for the Lord God. Like pure nectar, Bhakti is the sweetest and the most unforgettable experience of joy, happiness, bliss and ecstasy that a person can ever have in his life. Like the bee drinking nectar of a flower, a true Bhakta would like to enjoy nothing else except the charm of Bhakti; he is enamoured with Bhakti.

A Bhakta would choose Bhakti over every other means of spiritual reward as is endorsed in the epic Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 119.

The wholesome effects of drinking this 'spiritual nectar' have been outlined in the next three verses.]

४ यत् लब्ध्वा पुमान् सिद्धो भवत्य् अमृतो भवति तृप्तो भवति

4 yal labdhvā pumān siddho bhavaty amṛto bhavati tṛpto bhavati

(4) On attaining that state of transcendental existence (when one has supreme devotion and love for Lord God; when one has developed true Bhakti for Lord God; when one has attained oneness with the Lord God), one achieves Siddhi (perfection in life and spiritual endeavours; perfection of the soul—"siddho bhavaty"), one becomes eternally blissful and delighted (amṛto bhavati), and one is fully contented and fulfilled (tṛpto bhavati).

[It is said here that at the climax of Bhakti, i.e. when the devotee reaches the pinnacle of devotion and love for Lord God, he acquires 'Siddhis'. The word 'Siddhi' means

acquisition of certain super-natural powers that entitles its possessor to do things that ordinary humans can't. In the context of Bhakti it essentially means that a person who has achieved perfection in the practice of Bhakti becomes so much spiritually empowered that nothing remains inaccessible to him. He gains perfection in bliss, happiness, contentedness and spiritual wisdom. All his desires are automatically fulfilled because the Lord takes care of him. From the worldly perspective, a true Bhakta is able to calmly meet all the challenges of life because he knows that the Lord God is always there to help him out. Further, he remains calm as he is not bothered about anything as long as his love for the Lord remains steady and firm.

The next reward that he gets is that he becomes 'Amrit-like'—i.e. he becomes a fount of eternal bliss and joy; he becomes eternally happy and satisfied like someone who has tasted pure nectar and wants nothing more.

And this being so, he attains 'eternal contentedness'—i.e. he has achieved what he had always wished to achieve. He is perfectly satiated.

So we see that these three great rewards of true Bhakti, viz. 'attainment of Siddhi', 'being Amrit-like' and 'being fully contented', are related to one another because all are in sync with each other.

When a devotee reaches perfection in his love and devotion for Lord God, he comes so close to the Lord God that all distinctions and distances between the two are erased. Hence, the devotee, the 'Bhakta', who practices 'Bhakti', devotion and love for Lord God, reflects the sublimely beautiful spiritual virtues of an exalted Being who has become God-realised, who has realized the supreme Truth in the form of the universal cosmic Consciousness that the Lord God represents.

This realization is a state of spiritual perfection that bestows an abiding sense of bliss and joy and peace upon the Bhakta. When this perfect state of Bhakti is reached, the Bhakta is deemed to have reached his goal in life. He attains eternal bliss and beatitude; he becomes fully contented and fulfilled with no desires left inside him.

After all, all creatures want to have perfect peace and joy in life; everyone wants that he or she should be able to enjoy complete freedom from miseries and torments that are so very natural and a part of life in this world. Once this goal is reached by practicing true and purest form of Bhakti, surely the devotee would want nothing more.

There are so many drinks available to a person to quench his thirst, and he tries all of them. But once he has tasted pure nectar, he would shun all other drinks. Likewise, a man seeks happiness and joy and peace in his life, and he tries so many methods and things to achieve them. He finds that all forms of happiness, joy and peace that he manages to get in this world are transient in nature, for none lasts for long. So once he accesses these virtues by the medium of Bhakti wherein he discovers that they are of the finest quality and ever-lasting, he surely wouldn't let go of them.

Since this sense of happiness, joy, bliss and peace is eternal and of the purest kind, the devotee becomes fully satisfied that he has got what he had always wanted. So he becomes contented and satiated. He no longer yearns for anything better and more.

From the spiritual and metaphysical perspective, the climax of Bhakti is reached when the individual devotee becomes in the likeness of his beloved Lord God. This exalted state of existence is synonymous with self-realisation and enlightenment that leads to establishment of oneness or a union between the soul of the individual creature and the universal cosmic Soul of creation. To wit, this is also the goal of Yoga—to bring about a union between the Atma that is pure

consciousness and known as the ‘self’ of an individual creature, and the Supreme Atma that is known as the Parmatma that represents the cosmic Consciousness embodied in the form of the Lord God the devotee worships and adores, for whom he has devotion and love.

So we can say that in reality Bhakti is like restoring the natural affinity, the natural sense of love and attraction that exists between two entities that are identical and inseparable from one another by their inherent nature. A simple example would illustrate this point: If we have two separate cups of water, one a small cup and another a larger one, and then pour them in a large tumbler. They would mix perfectly with each other; can anyone distinguish between them now? The two samples would perfectly gel with one another.

So likewise, a true devotee perfectly gels with the Lord God he loves when the former realizes that their real ‘selves’ is the Atma which is ‘pure consciousness’, and not their physical gross body which had separated them. When this realization dawns upon the intellect of a wise Bhakta then he has attained perfection in Bhakti. To wit, Bhakti helps to remove the artificial barrier of grossness that exists between the Bhakta and the Lord God, thereby bringing about a union of the two Souls who merge with one another immediately upon contact.

That which is gross, transient and perishable cannot be a source of eternal bliss and joy. So therefore, love of the world cannot be a source of eternal happiness as the world itself is gross, transient and perishable. Hence, when a person seeks joy and happiness from anything or anybody in this world, he fails to get eternal peace, and so he is always wanting for more. To wit, the reward that one gets by pursuing all other means to achieve his objective in life, except the path of Bhakti that leads to Lord God, is imperfect and of poor quality.

On the other hand, the Lord God who represents cosmic all-pervading Consciousness that is sublime, ethereal, eternal, unchanging and universal is a source of abiding joy and bliss. Hence, when a Bhakta aims for Lord God he gets perfection in life by way of eternal sense of bliss and beatitude, an abiding sense of joy and happiness, and a sense of eternal fulfillment and contentedness. To wit, the reward he gets by following the path of Bhakti that leads to God is perfect and of the highest quality.

Remember: True reality of the Bhakta (devotee) and the Lord God is the ‘Atma’ which is pure cosmic Consciousness. This Atma is an eternal entity that is inherently blissful, joyful, enlightened, contented and fulfilled. As long as the person does not realize the fact that his true ‘self’ is the Atma and not the gross body in which this Atma lives, he is subjected to all sorts of sorrows in life. But once he realizes this supreme and irrefutable Truth, he becomes calm and peaceful. He now knows that the true source of peace and beatitude is not outside somewhere else, but right inside him. Since this extremely exalted state of mind and intellect that leads to spiritual perfection is not possible for everyone to achieve, the easier path of Bhakti should be followed by him as this path helps him to focus his mind and his attention on a form of the same eternal Atma or pure cosmic Consciousness that appears so abstract for him, to a form that he would find easier to relate to and comprehend—i.e. the form of the Lord God that he adores and worships, a form that has a visible existence and attributes that the devotee can easily identify and relate with. But the end goal of the two paths is the same—attainment of union between the individual Atma (the Bhakta) and the supreme Atma (the Lord God) that bestows perfection and eternity.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 119 that essentially say that Mukti, i.e. liberation and deliverance from the world and its cycle of birth and death with its accompanying horrors, comes to a Bhakta even without his asking or desiring for it.

The next verse no. 5 answers the question: What sort of contentedness or ‘tripti’ does Bhakti grant to the Bhakta?]

५ यत् प्राप्य न किञ्चिद् वाञ्छति न शोचति न द्वेष्टि न रमते नोत्साही भवति

5 yat prāpya na kiñcid vāñchati na śocati na dveṣṭi na ramate notsāhī bhavati

(5) Once one (i.e. the devotee) attains it (i.e. the pinnacle of Bhakti; supreme form of devotion for Lord God), one cares for nothing else, he desires nothing else. He hankers for nothing; he grieves and laments for nothing; he neither hates anything nor delights in anything; and he finds no charm or interest or enthusiasm for (i.e. not tempted by) any of the sense pleasures of this gross mundane world (as they become inconsequential for him).

[In Lord Krishna’s famed ‘Srimad Bhagvad Geeta’, Canto 12, verse no. 17, an exactly similar idea is expressed when the Lord says “He who neither rejoices nor hates, who neither grieves or delights, who has no desires whatsoever, who renounces both the good and the evil actions, and becomes fully devoted to me—verily indeed, he is very dear to me”.

This aphorism has been used by sage Valmiki when he tells Lord Ram to live in the heart of a person who desires nothing in this world but purity of love, affection and devotion for the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 131.

There was another great sage named Sarbhanga. He had offered the reward of all his penances, meditation, fire sacrifices and other religious deeds to Lord Ram, and in return asked Lord Ram to give him the boon of Bhakti as there was nothing like it for attaining spiritual fulfillment. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 8.

A similar sentiment is expressed in ‘Vinai Patrika’, the wonderful Book of Prayers written by the acclaimed saint-poet Goswami Tulsidas, in verse no. 103, stanza no. 2. In brief he says—“I do not desire for anything; I do not want liberation and deliverance, nor do I want wisdom, wealth, prosperity, mystical powers and praise. The only thing I wish is to have selfless love and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram, and it should grow day by day.”

Such a devotee develops an exemplary level of equanimity and fortitude. “He gets angry at no one, he does not harbour animosity, ill-will or hatred for anyone in this world, he has no passions left in him, he lusts for nothing, and he has no ego and pride in him—because he sees his beloved Lord in all forms in this world, whether they are visible or invisible”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 112 (b).

In Srimad Bhagvad Mahapurāṇa, 6/12/22, sage Shukdeo (the parrot saint) has said “For a person who has dipped in the ocean of nectar symbolized by devotion and love for Lord Hari, the bestower of eternal peace, beatitude and bliss, what use would such a person have for the shallow water of the ditch.”

A realised devotee who has attained the highest level of devotion and love for Lord God is so much contented and fulfilled that he wants nothing more of anything, he longs for nothing else. He becomes extremely calm and steady in his mind so much so that nothing would move or disturb him under any circumstance; nothing affects his sense of equanimity and stability.

This verse highlights the characteristics of the sort of ‘contentedness’ or ‘tripti’ that a devotee achieves when he has attained the highest level of devotion and love for Lord God as mentioned in the previous verse no. 4.

The joy and bliss that the devotee obtains are of such pristine quality that all the charms and attractions of this world fade away in comparison, so it is natural for him to turn a blind eye to the latter.

Does it mean that the devotee has become emotionless and stone-like, or mentally deranged? Nothing of the sort! This state is similar to the transcendental state of existence of a self-realised Yogi, an ascetic, who has attained a ‘Turiya state’ when his mind and sub-conscious remain engrossed and submerged in deriving bliss and ecstasy from the thoughts of the Atma that is pure consciousness which resides inside him as his ‘true self’, the Atma which is the same as the cosmic Consciousness that is a fountain-head of eternity and beatitude. In this state of transcendental existence, the Yogi loses all awareness of his gross physical body as well as the world around him. He looks to be in an apparent state of stupor, but it is not that—actually he is submerged in deriving joy of drinking nectar of bliss and eternity that all other mundane matters fail to disturb him. He is not at all bothered about anything; nothing provokes him; nothing attracts him or repels him; nothing excites him or subjects him to depression and dismay. He becomes exemplarily calm and peaceful.

We can understand this phenomenon by a simple example. It is like the case of a man who has partaken of a hearty meal of the choicest of delicacies, and is also assured that this food will always be available to him in future. Say, would he then want to eat any more of the ordinary food that had been his staple diet for all his earlier life? He would be so much satiated that he would harbour no thoughts for any other kind of food except the one he had been fortunate and privileged to have tasted.

Another way of looking at this is that when one’s mind and heart are overjoyed, one would also feel that his stomach is full. It is not that he has some disease but the joy so overwhelms him that it appears that that he has lost his appetite for food. To wit, when the spiritual aspirant begins to enjoy the bliss and joy that comes with having the purest and the highest form of devotion and love for Lord God, he loses his appetite for worldly charms and pleasures.

Once again, since no desires are left, there is no reason why a man would like or hate anything, any person or any situation; there is no reason for grieving at the loss of anything or delighting at acquiring it. His mind and sub-conscious have become tranquil and rested.

The next verse no. 6 further elaborates on this eclectic principle.]

६ यज् ज्ञात्वा मत्तो भवति स्तब्धो भवत्य् आत्मारामो भवति

6 yaj jñātvā matto bhavati stabdho bhavaty ātmārāmo bhavati

(6) When a person has gained knowledge of ‘it’ (i.e. when one has attained the supreme form of Bhakti, or devotion and love for Lord God that has been referred in

the forgoing verses), he is so intoxicated and overwhelmed (by its unique charm and pleasure that gives a sense of eternal bliss and beatitude) that he becomes silent and still even as he begins to revel in and thoroughly enjoy the ecstasy and bliss that arises from within his own self (i.e. from his own Atma) so much so that he remains eternally engrossed in the thoughts of his Atma, his pure conscious 'self'.

[Now it has become clear that in the final stages of Bhakti when a person has reached its climax, he attains the same state of blessed existence that a Yogi, an ascetic who practices Yoga, or meditation and contemplation, lives in. This exalted state of blessedness is equivalent to the Turiya state of existence of consciousness when a devotee becomes aware of his own true self known as the Atma. This 'Atma' is pure consciousness, and it is the same as the Supreme Atma known as the cosmic Consciousness that reveals itself in the form of the Lord God whom the devotee worships.

When the devotee has reached the higher stages of Bhakti—when he begins to so intensely love his dear Lord God with his heart and mind that he remains completely submerged in the thoughts of the Lord, and when nothing else matters to him because he has accessed the nectar that gives him a sense of sublime ecstasy, the experience of eternal bliss, peace and joy of the highest and the best order—it is then that he remains submerged in drinking this nectar of beatitude and felicity just like a bee which remains engrossed in drinking the nectar of the flower once it has found it. Never would this devotee get distracted from drinking this spiritual nectar under any provocation because his mind and heart are riveted to it.

Such a devotee then experiences the sort of ecstasy and bliss that is experienced by seasoned practitioners of meditation who meditate upon the Atma, the 'true self' that is nothing but pure consciousness. From the perspective of metaphysics as expounded in the Upanishads, this is called 'self-realisation'. In this eclectic state of transcendental existence, all grossness related to mundane existence is erased, and what remains is something that is sublime and ethereal by nature.

When the Bhakta experiences the highest level of bliss and beatitude, he becomes aware of the true meaning of 'self-realisation'. He understands that the sublime form of joy and bliss that he has achieved upon maturity of Bhakti is synonymous with the awareness of the 'self' known as the 'Atma'. This Atma is nothing but 'pure cosmic Consciousness' that is an eternal, all-knowing, all-pervading and blissful entity. So the Bhakta becomes enlightened about the metaphysical and theological Truth that the Lord God resides nowhere outside but right inside the inner being of all creatures—because the Lord, who is also known as the 'Parmatma', the Supreme Atma, is an embodiment of cosmic Consciousness that lives inside all living beings as their own individual Atma.

To wit, this means that the devotee realizes that the Lord God whom he had been searching for so long is, after all, so close to him that no distinction actually exists between him and the Lord he loves so much. To put it in a different way, it implies that "a self-realised, wise and enlightened Bhakta (devotee) begins to revel in his own self; he begins to enjoy his 'own self' as he realizes that the source of eternal happiness is right within him, and this realization fills him with ecstasy unbound because the source of eternal joy and sublime bliss is inherent in him".

The state of ecstasy obtained by a Bhakta who has attained the Lord and experienced his presence first hand, i.e. a Bhakta who has become 'self-realised' about his Atma as an image of the Supreme Lord, is wonderfully described in *Srimad Bhagavad Mahapurana*, 11/2/39-40 wherein it is said that "such a person who has

attained the Lord dances in joy, singing the Lord's glorious name with a heart dissolved in ecstasy, laughing and weeping at times, screaming and remaining dumb at other times, and generally behaving like a man possessed or a man who is mad; his behaviour transgresses all conventional norms and goes beyond understanding".

Another place where we read about this ecstatic state of a Bhakta is found in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-15 that precede Doha no. 10 where the condition of sage Sutikshan has been described as follows—"When the sage learnt that Lord Ram was coming towards where he lived, he became extremely ecstatic so much so that he lost awareness of his own self; he forgot who he was, where he was. He could not perceive any of the directions; he could not see the path before him, for everything became blurred for him. He ran forward once and backward again on the same track; he could not understand where he was going, or where he stood, for he had lost his bearing. He sometimes danced with joy, and at other times he sang wildly, singing merrily about the glories of the Lord. Then finally, at the climax of ecstasy, he became motionless; he sat down in the middle of the path with his body thrilled to the extent that it was full of goosebumps that resembled the skin of the jack fruit."

Say, who would like to leave such a sublime world full of eternal ecstasy and beatitude, and bargain it for a gross world of endless miseries and worries, or a world where joy and happiness are illusionary like water seen the mirage of a hot desert?

The first six Sutras till now have described the nature of devotion and the characteristics of a devotee. Now the following Sutras describe what Supreme Love for God is. Remember: A true devotee of the Lord becomes the Lord's true lover, and this 'love' is of the highest quality, most refined, and absolutely sublime and ethereal in nature. There is no trace whatsoever of grossness in this form of love between the Lord and his devotee.]

७ सा न कामयमाना निरोधरूपत्वात्

7 sā na kāmaya-mānā nirodha-rūpatvāt

(7) That true love for Lord God which devotion inspires is marked by highest form of renunciation, and therefore it is free from all desires (i.e. it is a purely selfless form of love for the sake of love itself; it is devoid of any grossness that may be associated with the word 'love'; it is sublime, ethereal and transcendental form of love).

[The main characteristic of 'love for God' is that it is selfless and without any expectation. The devotee does not want any reward for his love for the Lord. Besides this, such a devotee is deemed to have renounced all sorts of attachments and attractions that are gross in nature, such as the ones that are linked to this gross world and its sense objects.

To wit, the love for God is absolutely different from the love for the material things of the world. The love for God is sublime and ethereal by its inherent nature, while the love for the world relates to the sense organs that are inherently gross by nature and inclination.

The devotee who wants to truly love the Lord God must remember that he has to have the grand spiritual virtue of 'renunciation' in him. He has to renounce all

wants and desires of all kinds from his mind and heart for good. It is not possible to love two entities simultaneously with the same intensity, sincerity and depth of love, especially when these two have diametrically opposite nature. One has to choose between the two. In the case of 'Bhakti', i.e. devotion and love directed to Lord God, it is obvious that a sincere Bhakta (devotee) will have to choose between his beloved Lord God and the world of material charms. Obviously, a wise and enlightened Bhakta would reject his love for the world, the 'other entity', if he wishes to be honest in his love for his beloved Lord God. This means that he will have to 'renounce' the world and its material charms, as well as his misplaced love for his own gross body. He must realize that both his body and the world are perishable and givers of eternal misery and grief to him, while the love for Lord God bestows him with eternal joy, bliss and peace. The choice is obvious.

In the next verse no. 8, the concept of 'renunciation' is elaborated further.

In Srimad Bhagvad Mahapurāṇa, 3/29/13, Lord Krishna says, "My devotee does not want any kind of reward for serving me, even if I wish to grant them to him. These rewards may be any one of the six kinds, such as Saalokya (residence in my heavenly abode), Saristhi (having powers like mine), Saamipya (living close to me), Saarupya (having a form that is similar to my divine form), and Saaujya (final dissolution into my form to become one with me)."

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 85 we read that the crow-saint named Kaagbhusund has also refused to have any kind of reward other than having Bhakti when Lord Ram offered him all sorts of boons and asked him to choose what he would prefer. This single-minded pursuit of Bhakti, or devotion, for the Lord God so much pleased Lord Ram that he granted Kaagbhusund all the other boons as a gift to him alongside the boon of Bhakti though the saint did not want to have anything other than Bhakti.

To wit, this love for Lord God that the devotee has is a manifestation of the natural affinity that the individual's Atma has for its primary source, the supreme Atma known as the Parmatma, the Lord God. It's a natural bonding between the two that pulls them together just like a small piece of magnet that gets naturally and automatically pulled towards a larger magnet. Or we can say that it is like the case of the scattered pieces of iron (here represented by the individual creature) that are automatically pulled towards a magnet (here representing the Parmatma, the supreme Atma).

So, when the individual develops high love for Lord God, all other things in the world becomes meaningless and redundant, i.e. a true devotee renounces all his attractions and attachments with the material world.]

८ निरोधस् तु लोकवेदव्यापारन्यासः

8 nirodhas tu loka-veda-vyāpāra-nyāsaḥ

(8) This 'renunciation' (that is related to devotion and love for Lord God) indeed envisages total restraint from all activities, whether they are related to the secular world, or they are the religious activities as prescribed by the Vedas (scriptures).

[In order to focus the mind exclusively on Lord God, in order to get submerged or immersed in the thoughts of the Lord just like an ascetic involves himself in doing

deep meditation and contemplation, the devotee has to do away with all causes that may require attention of his mind and distract it from its main aim in life—which is, as far as the devotee is concerned, to focus on the Lord God and attain oneness with him.

The mind needs its full energy to concentrate on one task that is of top priority in order to do it whole-heartedly and to the best of its abilities. If a person allows himself to be involved in the activities of the world (secular activities) or any kind of religious activities (such as following the various rituals and sacraments as prescribed by the scriptures), then his mind will be left with little time and energy to focus on the main goal of the person's life—which is to attain abiding peace and happiness. This latter goal can only be achieved if the grossness and transience associated with all activities related to this gross and perishable existence are done away with, and instead of them the person involves himself in activities that are related to the spirit, the pure consciousness that is subtle, sublime, ethereal and eternal by nature. This latter form of activity that results in elevation of the 'self' and enables the doer to attain liberation and deliverance from all grossness associated with life and its inherent torments and miseries is to have Bhakti for Lord God—because the Lord is a personified form of cosmic Consciousness, one who bestows eternal peace, happiness, bliss and beatitude.

Hence, the 'supreme form of devotion for Lord God' implies complete renunciation of all activities, all dealings and all actions related to the secular world as well as to the religious field. Just like in the world where we have to pay a higher price for a better quality of any material thing that we acquire, in the spiritual world we have to pay the high price of renouncing all attachments and attractions for everything else that give comfort and pleasure, and instead focus ourselves on one single target—which is attainment of the Lord God.

To wit, put simply, if one wants to love his God, he will have to forgo his love for all other things, no matter how dear and valuable they are to him. This firmness in love for Lord God by renouncing all other things and attractions would prove that the devotee is sincere in his devotion for the Lord because he is ready to make the greatest of 'sacrifices' to attain his objective. After all, all religious activities are said to be complete only if one does some sort of 'sacrifice' at the end, even if it means doing a small fire sacrifice or making some form donation. But the reward for such 'sacrifices' are limited in their scope to this gross and perishable world. On the other hand, the 'sacrifice' by way of renunciation that is made for the sake of the Lord God will grant a reward that is eternal and supreme by nature—the reward of bliss, beatitude, felicity, peace and happiness for the devotee, and the reward of liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation for his soul.

It is interesting to note that in the verse the phrase "loka-veda-vyāpāra" has been used. The term "vyāpāra" literally means doing 'business or trade'. Business or trade is done to gain some benefit from any transaction. So therefore, all worldly activities, whether secular or religious, that a person does are meant to help him get some form of reward. If he does not expect to gain from them he won't do them. A person does any religious activity as prescribed by the Vedas because the Vedas tell him that he would get this or that benefit if he does them. If that reward is not got by him, or if he is not promised some certain reward for any religious activity, he would not do them. The same principle applies to all other activities related to the world. But in the case of Bhakti as in all cases related to 'true love', the lover, here meaning the devotee, does not expect any reward from his beloved, in this case the Lord God. The purest and the truest form of love is that which is free from expectations for any kind

of reward. That is why it is called ‘a sacrifice’; that is why it is like ‘true renunciation’. There is no ‘business-like bargain’ in love for Lord God; there is ‘no business in the field of Bhakti’.

Now, one may ask “how is it possible to not get involved in any activity while one lives in a world where action is a part of life”; “how can one actually practice renunciation?” It has been said earlier that Bhakti includes ‘doing selfless service to Lord God’; to ‘do everything for the sake of the Lord and to please him’. It clearly implies that when it is said that Bhakti means total renunciation it does not mean to be idle or inaction. It means to divert the mind from the world and fix it on the Lord God so that one may single-mindedly concentrate on his spiritual objectives, without any distraction. A true devotee asks for nothing but to have love and devotion for Lord God. He need not be inactive, but the trick is to do everything as a service of the Lord, and ask for only love for the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 129 where sage Valmiki has declared that Lord Ram lives in the heart of those who want only one reward for all their deeds, secular or religious, and it is to have unwavering love and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram.

True renunciation that Bhakti demands has been further explained in next verse no. 9. Refer also to verse no. 11 herein below which specifically explains what is actually meant by this philosophy of non-involvement in deeds or ‘renunciation of deeds’.]

९ तस्मिन् अनन्यता तद्विरोधिषूदासीनता च

9 tasminn ananyatā tad-virodhiṣūdāsīnatā ca

(9) Whole-hearted and single-minded devotion for the beloved Lord God, and complete indifference to everything other than God—this is the essence of true renunciation which Bhakti envisages.

[To wit, ‘true renunciation’ implies focusing the mind exclusively on Lord God, and to turn it away from all other pursuits that act as obstacles in it. Therefore, true devotion also includes exclusive service to Lord God. It means doing everything for the Lord God, for his sake, for his pleasure, and for attaining him.

Idleness or inaction is not true renunciation. One can do his job but still be fully devoted to Lord God. Remember: The ‘renunciation’ here pertains to the state of the mind, the sub-conscious and the intellect. If the mind is not attached to what one does, if the mind is not involved or engrossed or perturbed and disturbed by the activity, and is able to remain focused on the Lord God, then it is renunciation in practice. Say, what is the use of not doing anything on the pretext of doing Bhakti, but allowing the mind to roam around wildly, longing for this and that? It is cheating the world and the self!

To wit, one can continue to go about his duties in this world, he need not sit idly, but the trick is to keep the mind free from all attachments and the heart free from all emotions and sentiments pertaining to the world and its material charms as well as to the demands of the body seeking self gratification.

The devotee should renounce all things and surrender himself to the Lord God as this makes him carefree. Then he would be able to worship the Lord and have

devotion for him with a free mind. Refer to verse no. 79 of this book Narad Bhakti Sutra.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 36 where Lord Ram has advised Sabari that true Bhakti is when one withdraws his mind from all worldly activities and focuses it on loving Lord God and having devotion for him.

What is 'single-minded or the purest form of devotion for Lord God?' This is explained in the next verse no. 10.]

१० अन्याश्रयाणां त्यागोऽनन्यता

10 anyāśrayāṇāṁ tyāgo'nanyatā

(10) The purest and the best form of devotion for Lord God is when the devotee relies exclusively on his beloved Lord, and abandons all other support and reliance.

[True devotion for Lord God by a devotee is when the latter has no one to look forward to except his beloved Lord; he has no other support other than his God.

The word “*āśraya*” means a refuge, a shelter, a place where one goes for succour and solace, a resting place. Hence, true devotion envisages that for the devotee, the Lord God is the only refuge, the only support, the only place where peace and succour is to be found, the only destination and aim of life.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 130, sage Valmiki has told Lord Ram exactly the same thing. The sage said: “Oh Lord Ram, you must live in the heart of those who have no other destination except you.”

Again the sage says, “He who abandons everything else and embraces you to his bosom, oh Lord you should live in his heart.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 36, Lord Ram has advised Sabari, the old woman devotee of the Lord, that Bhakti is to have complete and sole reliance upon the Lord God, and therefore one must remain calm and unmoved, neither feeling sorrow or worried, nor elated (because the Lord would take care of him and his worries on the one hand, and on the other hand he must not be delighted because all good things are a gift from the Lord to him and nothing that he has earned himself which could make him feel elated).

Lord Ram has explicitly endorsed this spiritual philosophy when he said, “If anyone says that he is my follower and is dependent upon me but harbours some sort of hope or support from others, say then what kind of belief does he have on me; how can he claim to be my follower or dependant?” Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46. [A person who thinks to the contrary is an imposter; he is a hypocrite; he is a non-believer or a disbeliever.]

True devotion for God means discarding all props to support oneself; it means to rely solely on the grace, mercy and benevolence of the Lord God. In the mind of a true devotee the existence of any other Lord does not exist, so there is no question of his expecting any support from anyone else. He regards the entire creation, the manifested and the un-manifested, as a revelation of his beloved God. His mental state is like a chaste woman who is exclusively devoted to her husband as described in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 5 where

it is said that “the best woman is one for whom no other man except her husband has any existence”.

When Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva, did Tapa (penance) before in her early days so that she can be married to the Lord, the seven celestial sages known as Saptrishis went to test her integrity, sincerity and commitment. They tried their best to deflect her from her chosen path and deviate her from the determination to marry Shiva by pointing out so many problems she would face if she marries the Lord. Parvati’s answer set an example of single-minded dedication to one’s chosen Lord; she replied—“Lord Mahadeva (Shiva) may be a treasury of all bad qualities while other Lords such as Vishnu may be a treasure-trove of the best of qualities in existence, but oh sages I can’t help because when one begins to love someone then he is best suited for that person no matter what his drawbacks may be. [Hence, please excuse me.]” Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 80.]

She further told them, “Listen sages! It is my vow that I may be born for thousands of years and remain unmarried, but if I would ever marry then I would marry only Lord Shiva”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 81.

In Tulsidas’ “Dohawali”, verse no. 53 it is said: “All the worldly interests as well as the spiritual interests will be taken care of by Sri Sitaram. Then say, why should and why would Tulsidas go and knock at the doors of others seeking favours?”

In “Dohawali”, verse no. 54 it is said: “When all your worldly desires and needs, as well as the final liberation and deliverance of your soul (emancipation and salvation of the Atma) can be achieved only at the one place (i.e. with Lord Ram), then it is not at all advisable and apt for you to beg at the doors of others (because that would not only prove that you are extremely stupid and greedy but would also be insulting for your beloved Lord who goes to any length to ensure your happiness, peace and welfare; it would be an outright betrayal).”

In “Dohawali”, verse no. 84 it is said: “Oh Lord Ram, the king of Kaushal! Whether good or bad, this Tulsidas is yours. If this is the truth, then his welfare is assured in all the three worlds (the heaven, the hell, and the present world where he lives at present) and the three eras or phases of time (past, present and future).”

In “Dohawali”, verse no. 138 it is said: “A person who, inspite of being learned, expects emancipation and salvation of the soul without worshipping and paying homage to Lord Ram is like an animal without a horn or tail (i.e. he has a deformed mind and corrupted intellect which has anomalous and erroneous thoughts that are in breach of the law of Nature and the well established principles of the ancient scriptures).”

In “Dohawali”, verse no. 139 it is said: “Such good fortunes as worldly riches, a full and contented home, happiness and joys, friends and compatriots, as well as parents and brothers etc. that do not naturally, cheerfully and willingly aid and inspire a person to turn towards Lord Ram's holy feet should perish.”

In “Dohawali”, verse no. 277 it is said: “Tulsidas says that he has only one source of reliance, only one source of strength, only one source of hope, and only one belief or faith (and it is in Lord Ram).

Verily, Tulsidas has become like the bird ‘Chatak’ for the sake of the dark rain-bearing cloud in the form of Lord Ram.

[The bird ‘Chatak’, kind of an Indian cuckoo, keeps its attention fixed on the dark rain bearing clouds during the rainy season because it is reputed to quench its thirst from the rain drops falling from it. The Chatak drinks only this rain drop falling

directly from the cloud in its mouth to quench its thirst, preferring to die if the cloud does not oblige it, but does not depend upon any other source of water to survive.

Similarly, Tulsidas says that he seeks only from his beloved Lord Ram, and no one else. The analogy of the ‘dark rain bearing cloud’ is significant here because Lord Ram has a dark complexion that has been often compared to the colour of this cloud.]”

In Tulsidas’ magnificent Book of Prayers, verse no. 174 tells us that “one should abandon contact with all those who do not love Lord Ram as if they are our greatest enemy even though such people may otherwise be very dear to us”.

११ लोकवेदेषु तदनुकूलाचरणं तद्विरोधिषूदासीनता

11 loka-vedeṣu tad-anukūlācaraṇaṁ tad-virodhiṣūdāśīnatā

(11) [True service to the Lord God has been defined here.] Performance of only those deeds that please the Lord God and are agreeable to him, out of all the deeds that are regarded as secular in this world as well as those that are religious and prescribed by the scriptures (Vedas), is deemed to be doing true service to the Lord.

[This verse elaborates on the principle enunciated earlier in verse no. 8. To wit, the important point is to do deeds that please the Lord, and not doing them because they conform to the norms of society and are expected to be done, or are ordained by religious requirements or as injunctions of the scriptures.

To wit, a devotee does all that he does with the pious thought “Oh Lord, I am doing it for you exclusively.” One should restrain oneself from doing anything that is contrary to his service of the Lord; one should refrain from doing anything which does not serve the Lord or pleases him; one should be indifferent towards all things that stand between him and his beloved Lord God.

This is the spirit of ‘renunciation’ as propounded earlier in verse no. 8. Sitting idle is not renunciation, and likewise doing deeds for Lord God is not being involved in the deed either. One must understand the subtle hidden message of any scriptural advice in its spirit more than its literal meaning to actually benefit from it. Misinterpretation of a profound formula is usually more harmful than not understanding it at all because in the latter case the seeker would go to a wise teacher for guidance, while in the former case it would ruin him. Herein lies the importance of a wise and enlightened teacher as well. Such a teacher, the wise and enlightened and learned ‘Guru’, would show the light of truth to the eager disciple and lead him on the correct path to God-realisation.]

१२ भवतु निश्चयदाढ्याद् ऊर्ध्वं शास्त्ररक्षणम्

12 bhavatu niścaya-dāṛḍhyād ūrdhvaṁ śāstra-rakṣaṇam

(12) After having thus established an abiding and unwavering faith, love and devotion for Lord God, one should be careful not to neglect the advice of the scriptures, and

therefore fine-tune his devotion in accordance to their principles so that one gets their protection and is shielded from any missteps.

[This verse is remarkable in the sense that it prevents one from thinking that the previous verses, especially nos. 8 and 11, undermine the value of the scriptures or cause disrespect to them. The idea is plain and simple—that one should follow the advice of the scriptures with proper wisdom and understanding that their intent is to bring the creature nearer to the Supreme Being and not pull him away from the latter. So merely following the scriptures in the letter without understanding their spirit and intent is like honouring the body which lacks life in it—i.e. it is like honouring a dead body which is to be avoided at all costs.

The words used in this verse are “śāstra-rakṣaṇam”. While “śāstra” means that which teaches, guides and advises, which are the functions of the scripture, the word “rakṣaṇam” means to protect, to take sanctuary with. So the phrase would have two meanings—viz. (i) One should seek the guidance of the scriptures once one has decided to renounce the world and have love and devotion for the Lord God instead, because these scriptures would then tell him the correct way to be followed so that he can easily reach his goal of God-realisation; the scriptures would point out the pitfalls to him and guide him along to success. In this, the scriptures (śāstra) extend their protection (rakṣaṇam) to the seeker by alerting him about various risks and how to overcome them. And (ii) One must protect (rakṣaṇam) the dignity of the scriptures by not neglecting them, for they are wise teachers and source of wisdom and knowledge. Verily, ‘knowledge’ is needed for attaining success in even rudimentary things in life, and therefore the scriptures that are a treasure-trove of knowledge should be given their due respect.

This fact has been endorsed in Krishna’s Geeta, Canto 16, verse no. 24 which says: “The scripture alone is your guidance to determine what should be done and what should be avoided. Knowing this, you (Arjun) should act as advised in the scriptures.”

In all sooth and without gainsay, the scriptures are like the ‘lamp that shines the light of wisdom’. Say, can anyone, no matter how wise he may be, reach his goal in pitch darkness even if he knows where the goal is? The importance of studying the scriptures, especially devotional literature, and practicing their teachings is reiterated in verse no. 76 also.

The next verse no. 13 answers the question and elaborates further on: “Why the scriptures should be followed?”]

१३ अन्यथा पातित्यशङ्कया

13 anyathā pātitya-śaṅkayā

(13) For otherwise, there is the risk of fall and failure (in the spiritual path).

[Thus, if one neglects the advice of the scriptures and thinks that he can manage things on his own, then there is the grave risk of slipping and falling midway. Remember: The path to God-realisation is very slippery and precipitous by nature. The simplest of carelessness would make the seeker slip and fall just like a mountaineer who, driven by his excitement and bravado, tries to climb a steep

mountain on his own without seeking proper guidance and training. He is bound to slip and fall to his death somewhere.

In Geeta, Canto 16, verse no. 23, Lord Krishna says: “A person who neglects the advice of the scriptures and acts in an arbitrary way in accordance with his own sweet will, due to over-jealousness and over-confidence—he will neither gain perfection in life, nor would he reach his ultimate goal of self-realisation or God-realisation, nor would gain the goal of attaining happiness in life.

Remember: The scripture is like a wise, selfless and impartial teacher, guide and moral preceptor. One definitely needs such a guide in life.

The next verse no. 14 answers the question: “How long should the scriptures be followed by a spiritual aspirant/seeker?”]

१४ लोकेऽपि तावद् एव भोजनादिव्यापारस् त्व् आशरीरधारणावधि

14 loka 'pi tāvad eva bhojanādi-vyāpāras tv āśārīra-dhāraṇāvadhi

(14) One should do worldly deeds and activities in accordance with the guidance of the scriptures (i.e. to comply with their injunctions) and relevant to that point of time, while such bodily functions as eating food etc. continue till death. [Put simply, one must select to do deeds that are righteous and auspicious in the eyes of the scriptures, for this will determine a person's spiritual destiny. Of course, natural functions of the gross body such as eating food etc. do not come within this purview, for one has no control over them.]

[There are two types of actions a person's body performs. One is the deed a person does or the action that he takes over which he has the power to decide. A person may decide to do a certain thing, or decide not to do it. A person has freedom to choose between many options in this world, to decide what to do and what not to. In all such cases, he must be guided by the advice of the scriptures. Namely, he must do things that are good and right in the eyes of the scriptures, and shun those that the scriptures advice against. For instance, trading is allowed by the scriptures as a means of livelihood, meeting the needs of this world, and for genuine commerce. But if trading involves cheating others and generating greed and exploitation, then it is not to be done.

On the other hand, bodily functions such as eating and drinking cannot be avoided and chosen against as long as a man lives. So he has no choice over them. But of course he can control what he eats and drinks.

Hence, the idea of this verse is that a wise devotee should be very careful and selective about what he does, how he acts. It is his deeds and actions over which he has freedom to choose that would determine his spiritual fate, and not the routine functions of his body over which he has no control. So while deciding what to do and how to do it, one should follow the guidelines of the scriptures so that his actions and deeds do not stand in the way of his achieving the goal of God-realisation and attaining eternal happiness in life.

Put differently, a man must be wise to fine-tune his actions and deeds to fulfill his duties and responsibilities in life in accordance with the advice of the scriptures, but keeping in mind the necessities of time, circumstance and place where he lives. As far as bodily functions of eating and drinking are concerned, a wise devotee eats and

drinks anything with the thought that such food or drink is sanctified and it is an offering to the Lord God who resides within him as his own Atma, his pure conscious soul that lives in the subtle space of his heart.

The following verses expound further on the characteristics of Bhakti.]

१५ तल्लक्षणानि वाच्यन्ते नानामतभेदात्

15 tal-lakṣaṇāni vācyante nānā-mata-bhedāt

(15) Now, 'Bhakti' is being defined and its unique characteristics are being enumerated (by sage Narad). This is necessary especially because of existence of diversity of opinion on the subject, the multifarious ways it has been expressed, explained and practiced, and the many scriptural advices and injunctions regarding it.

[Sage Narad accepts that there are a lot many ways in which the eclectic spiritual 'Bhakti' has been defined and how to practice it explained by learned sages and seers over time. They have all explained Bhakti differently, and each one of them stressed on one or the other characteristic of Bhakti and a method of practicing it that was the best in their personal view.

Though all these ways are right, but such multiplicity of advice and multifarious injunctions only go to add to the confusion amongst spiritual seekers. An ordinary devotee gets confounded regarding what Bhakti actually consists of, how it should be practiced, what are its dos and don'ts. A person who aspires to adopt the path of Bhakti to seek fulfillment of his spiritual aspirations in life and reach his objective is left high-and-dry with countless ways this principle has been explained and the many ways its practice has been advised. So therefore, some precise, clear and practical guide on Bhakti, that can be easily understood and implemented, is needed. This is the supreme and pious purpose of sage Narad in this Book.

So first he tells us about other learned teachers and how they have dealt with the subject of Bhakti, how they have expressed their views and understanding on it. Then at the end Narad gives his own advice based on his personal experiences; he defines Bhakti in his own unique and simple way.

This method is very helpful in the sense that a reader becomes informed about the different opinions on Bhakti that were expressed by so many of the wisest and the most learned of teachers that ever lived. The spiritual aspirant's knowledge becomes wide, broad-based, comprehensive and all-inclusive. It becomes so easy for him to understand the difference between the various definitions of Bhakti and the way it is practiced. So when he goes on to read what sage Narad himself suggests about Bhakti, the spiritual aspirant is able to see why Narad's principles are more easy for him to follow, what its unique features are, and how he can actually benefit from Narad's method.

There is another way of looking at the question 'why Narad quoted other Authorities on Bhakti in his own teaching on the subject?' Well, one good point in this approach—of citing other learned Authorities on the subject of Bhakti—is that the reader gets a comprehensive view on the subject at a single place, without having to research so many thick and difficult-to-access scriptures as already stressed herein above. The other good thing is that it tells the spiritual aspirant that all these ways of Bhakti are equally effective and important because the Authorities who had proposed

them had verified their efficacy from their personal experiences. So this gives the aspirant a lot of choice to pick up a method that best suits his mental likings and aptitudes.

Then finally Narad gives his own advice—implying that he had benefited more by the method he proposes. And what is this method? He has laid it out in plain and simple terms in the beginning of his exposition on the subject: verily, it is ‘pure and true love for the Lord God’ that is called Bhakti. If we examine this simple formula we discover that ‘love’ encompasses such virtues as affection, longing, dedication, commitment, sincerity in whatever is done, faith, single-minded pursuit, remembrance of the beloved at all times of life, selfless service to the beloved, having no other reliance, no other source of solace and succour except the beloved, and so on and so forth.

Hence, a Bhakta’s life revolves around his Lord God; the Lord becomes the very purport and purpose of his existence. Verily indeed, this is true form of Bhakti that Narad proposes. Say, if a child loves its parent in this way, is it not for the parent to take special care of this child? So is the case with the Lord God: The Lord is especially careful about the destiny of his true Bhakta!

Now, ‘love’ and ‘devotion’ go hand-in-hand, are inseparable from each other, and they gel perfectly with each other just like water and milk. Just as the element of ‘love’ is crucial in the child’s eternal bonding with its parent, and the more ‘devoted’ the child is towards its parent the more the parent loves the child, so it is with the Lord and his devotee. ‘Love and devotion for Lord God’ are the crucial keys for God-realisation, according to Narad. All other methods flow from these two cardinal principles. Love and devotion help to establish harmony between the various means of doing Bhakti. None of the methods of doing Bhakti would give the desired result if the elements of love and devotion, of affection and dedication towards the Lord God are not an integral part of any such method.]

१६ पूजादिष्व् अनुराग इति पाराशर्यः

16 pūjādiṣv anurāga iti pārāśaryah

(16) According to sage Veda Vyas, the son of sage Paaraashar, Bhakti (devotion) consists of developing affection in (i.e. finding interest in and enjoying) the worship of the Lord God, amongst other things.

[In this verse no. 16 as well as in verse nos. 17 and 18 that follow herein below, Sage Narad has outlined two fundamental ways in which the Lord God can be worshipped: One method is an external form of worship where the visible form or aspect of the Supreme Being is honoured, and the second method is an internal form of worship wherein the Supreme Being’s invisible and sublime form that is all-pervading and symbolized by the cosmic Consciousness is honoured.

In verse nos. 37 and 79 also, the importance of worshipping the Lord has been reiterated.

Sage Veda Vyas’ formula of worship relates to the external form of worship. A slight variant of it is sage Garga’s method given in verse no. 17 where one worships the Lord by way developing longing to hear the Lord’s stories and glories or any other thing that is associated with the Lord instead of things associated to the gross world.

Both these methods are ‘external forms of worship of the Lord God’. This form of worship is easier and is followed by those devotees whose mind and intellect are not sufficiently evolved or competent to follow the second method of worshipping the formless aspect of God.

The second method of worship is advised by sage Shandilya who proposes the ‘internal form of worship’ which is equivalent to meditation and contemplation on the ‘self’ known as the Atma, a sublime and ethereal entity that represents cosmic Consciousness and forms the true identity of all living beings. This form of worship is done by Yogis or ascetics, or by devotees who have a higher level of wisdom and intellect. This system requires exemplary self-control over the sense organs and mind, and it is a bit tough to implement as compared to the first system. This method of worship is stressed in verse no. 18.

Sage Veda Vyas is a legendary figure and was the most learned seer of his time. He is the one who had classified the primary text of the Vedas (original Hindu scriptures) into their present four divisions (known as Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharva Vedas), had compiled the Upanishads (the grand philosophical treatises on spiritualism, metaphysics and theology), penned the eighteen great Purans (mythological history of the Hindus), as well as the Srimad Bhagvad Maha-Puran.

According to him, Bhakti or devotion consists of ‘worshipping the Lord God’. There are other methods of practicing devotion, but Veda Vyas says it is the best method according to him.

Now, it is not said what ‘form’ of the Lord should be worshipped. Cleverly, Vyas left this option open—i.e. one can either worship the form of the Lord that has attributes, a form that is visible and worshipped as an image (such as a consecrated image in the temple or at home), or one can worship the invisible, cosmic and all-pervading form of the Lord as pure Consciousness. Which form should be worshipped depends upon the level of intellectual development, the aptitude and preferences of the worshipper. For an ordinary worshipper (read—‘devotee’), the easy method of offering his worship and respect to the formed variant of the Lord, i.e. to an image of the Lord such as the one that is consecrated in a temple or even at home, suffices. For those who are more intellectually evolved, learned, enlightened and self-realised, the Lord is preferred to be worshipped in the form of the Atma, the cosmic Soul that stands for pure Consciousness which is boundless, without attributes, all-pervading, omnipresent and eternal. This latter devotee would see his Lord everywhere, and then whether he goes to a temple or not, whether he offers prayers to a specific form of the Lord or not, it does not matter.

So obviously, worshipping of the Lord would take different forms. For worshipping the image of the Lord God there are rituals and formal ways which are collectively called ‘Puja’ or ‘Pooja’. This Puja can be simple or elaborate; it can be done collectively as in temple worship, or individually by a devotee at his home. It can take the form elaborate rituals and sacrifices and offerings, or it can be as simple and humble as offering of a prayer that comes straight from the devotee’s heart.

The other form of worship that is done by the learned and enlightened worshipper consists of meditation and contemplation on the cosmic form of the Lord as the Parmatma, the embodiment of pure cosmic Consciousness that is all-pervading, omnipresent, invisible, attribute-less, eternal, sublime, subtle and ethereal in its essential form.

From a broader perspective, even honouring the various manifestation of Nature as trees, rivers, mountains and animals on earth, the many celestial bodies such

as the sun and the moon in the sky, the elements such as the air, fire, water, earth and sky, and other such entities also come within the ambit of worshipping the Lord God as the Lord is the one who is revealed in all these forms.

Extended further, serving mankind and helping the needy is also an obvious form of worship of the Lord God as the Lord is the one who is revealed in all these various forms.

The main point to note here is that mechanical way of doing worship by way of service or rituals or sacrifices or making offerings etc., is not true form of Bhakti. What is needed is to 'love' doing them, to be 'committed to these activities', to 'do them with earnest faith and devotion'. This would be 'true Bhakti' according to sage Veda Vyas.

The aim of Bhakti is to help the devotee, the 'worshipper', come closer to the Lord he worships, the Lord for whom he has Bhakti. So only when one worships the Lord with full involvement and commitment of the mind by way of taking full interest in worshipping the Lord in any of the ways outlined in the above discussion, fully enjoying such acts and developing affection for them to the extent that one would prefer to do such things over all other demands of life—then only would one truly have Bhakti for the Lord God. This is what sage Veda Vyas says.

In this context we may see what Prahalad, who had been one of the other great devotees of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, since his childhood days, says about the various forms that 'worship' takes in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇ (7.5.23). He says:

"The essential activities related to devotion are: (1) Hearing about the Lord, (2) Chanting the Lord's glories, (3) Remembering the Lord, (4) Serving and meditating upon the Lord's holy lotus-like feet, (5) Worshipping the Lord, (6) Praying to the Lord, (7) Thinking oneself as being an eternal servant or follower of the Lord, one who is eternally obliged and committed to the Lord, (8) Becoming a fast friend of the Lord, and (9) Surrendering everything to the Lord."

The eclectic view that 'worshipping the Lord in physical terms is an expression of Bhakti' has been endorsed by sage Valmiki in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 129 where the sage tells Lord Ram: "Oh Lord, you live in the heart of those who offer food to you before eating it, who wear clothes after offering them to you, who bow his head before you and his teacher (whom he reveres as much as you because he has shown the worshipper the way to worship you), who offer humble prayers to you, who worship the Lord's holy feet in the company of all the members of their families, who have no reliance other than the Lord, who think that by going to the holy feet of the Lord they have visited all the holy pilgrim places, who chant your holy name, and who make oblations and sacrifices to you and offer everything to you."]

१७ कथादिष्व् इति गर्गः

17 kathādiṣv iti gargaḥ

(17) According to the doctrine of sage Garga, Bhakti (devotion) consists of developing affection and interest for listening to the glorious stories related to the Lord God, amongst other things.

[Refer to verse nos. 55 and 80 in the context of this present verse.

This is the second way of practicing Bhakti. Sage Garga says that Bhakti includes finding interest in and enjoying hearing the many holy stories related to the Lord God, about his various manifestations, and the different ways they have been narrated and explained by learned preachers. One must develop longing to hear such glorious stories, and not get bored by them.

Listening to the divine stories of the Lord includes listening to the glories of the Lord's holy name, and enjoying reciting the Lord's name individually or in a group. This is called Japa and Kirtan respectively.

Repeated hearing of the Lord's divine stories is important as it helps to remove doubts about the Lord, his holiness and divinity, as well as to help the mind become more focused on the thoughts of the Lord and move away from the thoughts of the gross material world.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 128 where sage Valmiki has endorsed this view when he told Lord Ram that the Lord should live in the heart of those whose ears are like the ocean which continuously receive rivers symbolized by the divine stories of the Lord, but they never get filled—i.e. they never get tired of hearing the Lord's divine stories.

Again, the importance of hearing the divine stories of the Lord has been highlighted in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 114 where it is said that the stories related to Lord Ram are like a clap that scares away birds symbolized by doubts and confusions.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 53 it is clearly stated that “those who want to cross this huge ocean symbolized by this world of life and death should use the Lord's stories as a robust boat that would take them across safely.”

These activities—i.e. hearing the Lord's stories, chanting his holy name, discussing and conversing about the Lord etc.—help the devotee develop a natural bond of love and affinity with the Lord God and focusing his otherwise wayward mind on higher spiritual goals of life. When the mind begins to enjoy such stories and revel in the joy derived from chanting the Lord's holy name, gradually it would lose interest in the temptations of the material world as it would realize that they do not give him any worthwhile happiness. On the other hand, the mind would begin to find charm in always thinking of the Lord and remaining hooked to it.

Sage Garga was the family priest and preceptor of Lord Krishna's family. It was he who had done the naming ceremony of Lord Krishna and his elder brother Balaram. A whole lineage of sages who had been his disciple early in their lives had assumed his name as their surname.

The Srimad Bhagvad Mahapurana, 1/5/22 says: “The wise men have declared that the main purpose for doing Tapa (penance and austerity), acquiring Gyan (true knowledge and enlightenment), doing Yagya (fire sacrifices), recitation of the Vedas, and making charities etc. is to develop affection for the Lord and hearing his divine glories.”

In Srimad Bhagvad Mahapurana, 10/1/4, sage Sukdeo tells king Parikshit: “Descriptions of the Lord (i.e. the Lord's glories and his divine stories) that have been preached or taught by those who are free from all material desires is the right medicine for the soul which is trapped in the cycle of birth and death. Such narrations delight the hearer's ear and the mind. Therefore, who will not like to hear the Lord's glories and divine form except a butcher, i.e. a stupid person who wants to kill his own self and suffer his soul to the endless cycle of hellish misery?”]

१८ आत्मरत्यविरोधेनेति शाण्डिल्यः

18 ātma-raty-avirodheneti śāṇḍilyaḥ

(18) In the views of sage Shandilya, 'Bhakti' (devotion) is a state of sublime being that is not opposed to the joy and bliss that are derived from attainment of self-realisation (of the Atma, the soul, the pure consciousness that forms the true 'self' of the devotee).

[Refer also to verse no. 6 in the context of the present verse.

Sage Shandilya says that any form of devotion for Lord God can be called 'Bhakti' if it does not clash with or acts as an obstacle to or causes hindrance in self-realisation by the devotee. Bhakti must support the spiritual aspirant in his quest for attaining eternal peace, happiness, beatitude and bliss; it must support him to find liberation from all delusions associated with the gross existence in this mundane world; it must deliver him from all the miseries associated with the cycle of birth and death; it must lead to his ultimate emancipation and salvation. If these spiritual objectives of the soul are not achieved, Bhakti has not fructified. If these objectives are attained by the spiritual aspirant by meditating on the 'self' with the enlightened view that the Atma is an image of the Supreme Atma known as the Parmatma or the Lord God whom he worships and loves, then the person is practicing Bhakti by all means.

On the other hand, if the devotee practices any method of doing Bhakti but this method comes in the way of his meditation on the 'self' and deriving bliss from it, then such method of Bhakti would lead him nowhere, and it is not deemed to be the correct path to God-realisation, according to sage Shandilya. This way is called "ātma-raty"—to revel in the 'self', to enjoy the bliss originating from the 'self', to remain submerged in the thoughts of the 'self' and delight in it. But one thing must be clearly understood here—and it is that this 'self' refers to the pure conscious Atma of the spiritual aspirant, and not to his gross physical body as the latter is not his pure self.

The eclectic reward of devotion for Lord God and doing meditation on the Atma, the pure consciousness that resides inside the subtle space of the heart of the aspirant which forms his 'inner-self', are the same. Both Bhakti and meditation on the 'self' give a profound sense ecstasy, a sense of abiding bliss and sublime delight that cannot be measured in physical terms as they are sublime and ethereal in nature.

Thus, 'Bhakti' and 'Meditation on the Self' are the two sides of the same coin as it were.

Hence, reveling in the bliss obtained by meditation on the 'self', the Atma, the pure consciousness, is deemed to be doing Bhakti. The logic behind this precept is simple: The devotee has become so highly enlightened that he realizes that his pure consciousness known as the Atma is a fractional form of the Supreme Consciousness known as the Parmatma, or the Lord God, whom he worships. He understands that the Lord God, who is also known by the name of the Parmatma, the One who embodies cosmic Consciousness, resides inside all living beings as their 'true self' known as the individual's Atma which is a fraction of the Cosmic Atma. So therefore, instead of worshipping the Lord anywhere outside or in any other form, he begins to concentrate

his mind on worshipping and thinking of the Lord who resides right within him as his own Atma.

To wit, such a self-realised devotee begins to do ‘meditation’ on the inner ‘self’ as a method of practicing Bhakti to realize his beloved Lord God. And in this spiritual endeavour of his, he is duly rewarded when he experiences a sense of exemplary ecstasy and bliss sprouting forth from his inner-self like a fountain of sweet nectar oozing out from a hidden subterranean spring-well! This state marks the state when he has become matured in his quest for God-realisation by the path of Bhakti.

We can extend the meaning of this verse to include ‘selfless service’. Refer also to verse no. 48 in this context. It is because such service gives undiluted joy to the doer of the service; he does it cheerfully and derives immense internal satisfaction by what he does. So his inner-self feels delighted and his heart feels fulfilled by such service. This selfless form of service pleases the Lord because such service pleases his ‘inner-self’, i.e. his Atma, and this Atma is an image of the Parmatma, the Lord God whom the devotee worships and tries to please. Obviously, by pleasing his inner-self, the devotee has pleased the Lord God who resides inside his own heart in a very subtle form as the Atma!

The Lord God is viewed at two levels by any spiritual aspirant: for the eyes of his gross physical body, the Lord is visible in the form of an image, while for the eyes of his enlightened mind and awakened intellect, the Lord is visible in a subtle form called the Atma that is present right inside his own self.

So therefore, one can worship the Lord by his physical body in any of the ways prescribed in this book, and at the same time he can also worship the Lord by his mind and intellect by contemplating upon the Lord and meditating on his invisible form as the Atma. Both these means of Bhakti must compliment each other, and not oppose each other. This is what sage Shandilya emphasizes.

A word of caution here: Such forms of Bhakti must be honest and sincere; there should be no foul-play, deceit and pretension. Remember: If one adopts any of the counterfeit methods, then he is only cheating his own self and no body else.]

१९ नारदस् तु तदर्पिताखिलाचारता तद्विस्मरणे परमव्याकुलतेति

19 nāradas tu tad-arpitākṣhilācārātā tad-vismaraṇe parama-vyākulateti

(19) [Now, we shall read what sage Narad says about Bhakti himself; how he defines and interprets it.]

Narad says that to him, Bhakti implies two things—viz. (i) dedicating all actions and deeds to the Lord God, and offering everything at the altar of the Lord; and (ii) feeling an intense pain of separation from someone extremely beloved if one does not remember the Lord for even a fraction of a moment.

[Sage Narad now proposes his own formula for Bhakti. He advises two things here: (i) One, to offer all deeds selflessly to the Lord, and (ii) To love the Lord so intensely that one remembers him each moment of his existence, whether awake or asleep.

To wit, Narad says that all notions of Bhakti (devotion) are alright, but if they do not involve intense love for the Lord God, or if one does not offer everything to his Lord God, then these notions of Bhakti seem hollow.

When a person truly has devotion (Bhakti) for Lord God, then it is deemed that he truly loves the Lord, and he has truly submitted himself to the Lord, and therefore all that he has belongs to the Lord, and all that he does too belongs to the Lord. His thinking is: “Oh Lord, whatever I do with my body and its sense organs, with my power to speak, with my mind and its power to think—I offer everything to you. Indeed, I am doing everything for your sake. Nay, it is you who are getting these things done through me. So who am I, what have I done, and what reward is mine?”

In *Srimad Bhagvad Geeta* of Lord Krishna, Canto 9, verse no. 27, the Lord says: “Whatever you do—enjoyment (of the world etc.), penances, charity etc.—offer everything to me.”

Again, in *Srimad Bhagvad Geeta*, Canto 6, verse no. 47, the Lord told Arjun: “Of all the Yogis (ascetics), he who devotedly worships me with his mind focused exclusively on me is treated by me as the best ascetic.”

In *Srimad Bhagvad Geeta*, Canto 8, verse no. 7, the Lord says: “Therefore Arjun, remember me each moment and go on with your fight (i.e. endure with your duties in the world). With your mind and intellect focused on me and my divine form, it is sure that you will come to me (i.e. you will attain me).”

In *Srimad Bhagvad Geeta*, Canto 18, verse no. 65, Lord Krishna tells Arjun: “Always think of me, become my devotee, worship me, and offer your homage unto me. Thus you will come to me without fail. I promise you this because you are my very dear friend.”

It is to be noted that all these definitions or descriptions of Bhakti compliment each other; they are not exclusive and opposed to each other. By reading them, the spiritual aspirant gets a comprehensive view of Bhakti. Then he can select one or more path that he finds suitable to him. The emphasis is on devotion for Lord God in one’s deeds, thoughts and words.

But Narad stresses that the root of Bhakti lies in total self-surrender to the Lord God when he says that one should offer everything at the altar of the Lord. He has already said in verse no. 2 that Bhakti means true form of supreme love for Lord God. He elaborates now to say what kind of this love should be—verily, it should be so intense that the devotee can’t live even for a moment without the thoughts of his beloved Lord.]

२० अस्त्य् एवम् एवम्

20 asty evam evam

(20) [Narad says—] It is like this; it is indeed like this!

[Narad says that there are many more definitions and descriptions of Bhakti, and how it should be practiced, but all of them are based on the principle proposed in the previous verses.

Bhakti is a subject that is a very sublime matter of the Spirit, and one can have a multidimensional approach to it. So Narad says that though what he has said till now summarizes the essential nature of Bhakti, but one must understand that it can take many other forms too. To clarify his point and give an example of how one should love the Lord God, Narad cites the love of the Gopis for Lord Krishna in the following verses.

The Gopis' 'love' for Lord Krishna when the Lord was a child was so exceptionally deep, intense, undiluted, honest, undistracted and endearing that it overwhelmed them and virtually possessed their entire being. To wit, the Gopis' love for Krishna represents the true form in which a devotee is expected to love his Lord God.]

२१ यथा वृजगोपिकानाम्

21 yathā vraja-gopikānām

(21) (Devotion and love for the Lord God should be—] Just like the Gopis of Vraja (Vrindavan) had (for Lord Krishna during his childhood days).

[These 'Gopis' were ordinary female householders of Vrindavan who loved Lord Krishna when he was a young child so intensely that their love for Krishna became legendary and a touchstone to measure and judge the emotion of love, affection and devotion for all times to come. The Gopis loved Krishna more than anything else in their lives. Their whole being was possessed with love for Krishna, and irrespective of their age and social standing they loved Krishna even more than they would love their own selves.

The Gopis were not scholars of any scripture, nor were they doing any kind of Yoga or Tapa (meditation or penance respectively) or any other kind of religious or spiritual practice. They were ordinary women folk of all age groups, but when they came in contact with Krishna they were so charmed and enamoured by the Lord's inherent spiritual pull, which drew all of them towards him like a magnet pulling scattered pieces of iron that rush to the magnet and cling to it involuntarily, that these Gopis became virtually possessed by Lord Krishna. They thought of nothing else but Lord Krishna; they remembered Krishna while awake and asleep; they did their daily chores nonchalantly and almost mechanically because their mind was fixed on Krishna. When the Lord grew up and left Vrindavan to move onwards in the journey of his life, first to Mathura and then onwards to Dwarka, the Gopis never forgot him all their lives. They lived like someone possessed, lost in thoughts, contemplative and pensive.

Lord Krishna knew that the way Gopis loved him was in effect a transcendental form of devotion for Lord God. It entails a life-long commitment to the Lord God one is devoted to and reveres. This sort of transcendental love never gets reduced or fades, and it is not even dependent on the physical barrier of distance between the lover and the beloved. It is because this love is transcendental in nature, and it relates to the inner-self which is an eternal entity.

Hence, Gopis' love and devotion for Lord Krishna exemplifies the way a devotee is expected to love and be devoted to his or her Lord God. A devotee may be an ordinary householder like the Gopis, he may not have even studied the scriptures or may not have a Guru (teacher or guide) to show them the path, and he will go about his routine life just like others. But internally his entire being is lost in the thoughts of his beloved Lord God; his mind is fixed on the Lord; his heart yearns to meet the Lord; his body wishes to embrace the Lord and fall on his holy feet; his soul wishes to merge with the Lord and becomes eager to get rid of the physical body that prevents

this from happening! Even a fleeting thought of separation from Krishna made the Gopis restless, but when this physical separation did come, because the Lord had to move on in life and fulfill his other obligations, the Gopis lived the rest of their lives like a person possessed by some spirit, a person whose mind had been numbed by some grave shock but who simply is unable to overcome this shock and forget the thoughts of his earlier life, or like a widow who is forced to be separated from her beloved husband by the powerful force of destiny called ‘death’.

The Gopis did not chant any holy names, nor did they love Krishna and remembered him with the understanding that he was a manifestation of the Supreme Lord. They loved him just for the sake of pure and simple ‘love’. This love was spontaneous and sublime by nature; it was not pretentious or a means to entertain one’s self and satisfy one’s innate carnal desire for sense gratification. It was a love that was holy and related to the Atma, the soul, the true self of the Gopis!

Vraj, more commonly known as Vrindavan today, was a village or a small town with simple folks, and their main occupation was agriculture and animal husbandry, especially rearing of cattle such as cows. Everyone knew his neighbour, and there was no closed door for them. A child of any house had the freedom to go to his neighbour’s place, and was welcome like he was their own son. When Krishna came into the lives of these simple residents of Vrindavan, the Lord’s natural spiritual charm and the aura of divinity that effused from him immediately took hold of their imagination and sub-conscious mind. The Lord’s childish ways, his pranks and prattle, his naughty smile and mischievous ways endeared him exceedingly to the people so much so that whenever he went to anyone’s house he was not only warmly welcomed but the householder liked that he would stay there for as long as he wanted. Both the male members and the female members of the house loved Krishna equally and dearly, but the ladies were able to express this natural affection for the Lord more vibrantly and effectively as this is the natural quality and wont of mothers. A mother is able to better express and show her natural inclination to have love and affection for a child, especially one who is as adorable as Krishna was, as compared to the father who is more reserved and conservative in such overt expressions. Hence, the love of Gopis, the female householders of Vrindavan, is cited everywhere in reference to their love for Krishna instead of the Gopas, the male members of the society.

This in brief is exactly how the Gopis loved Lord Krishna—and by example it also should be the way a devotee ought to love and be devoted to his or her Lord God. The Gopis are stellar instances of how one should be devoted to Lord God and how one should love the Lord. The Gopis are the most exalted amongst all ‘lovers’ of the Lord as they had sacrificed everything and their entire being on the altar of love for Lord Krishna, even if it invited some sort of ridicule and ignominy in the process.

Lord Krishna had acknowledged the Gopis’ love and devotion for him in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇa, 10/46/4-6 when he told Uddhav, his messenger to the Gopis: “They (the Gopis) have not only given their mind to me but their entire being is surrendered to me and is centered in me. For my sake they have renounced everything connected to their physical body, and have mentally taken refuge with me alone (i.e. they remember me always and are unaware what their physical bodies do). I am the highest object of their adoration and affection. Verily indeed, I am their very own ‘self’! I stand alongside all who have sacrificed or given up all their interests in this world as well as the world thereafter (next life; destiny) for my sake. Oh Uddhav! Since I am at a distance from them, they (the Gopis) live a life of numbness, of utter nonchalance and total indifference as if they were possessed by some spirit. It is because they think constantly about me; their mind is focused on my thoughts, leaving

no space for any other thing so much so that even the feeling of pain eludes them. Verily Uddhav, the Gopis somehow manage to live in the belief that some day I will come to them at Vrindavan.”

Remember: The Lord is exceedingly indebted to such devotees, and he does not even know how to sufficiently reward them except to love them more than they love him on the one hand, and on the other hand calling them to him to become one with his own Self! This is clear in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurana, 10/32/22 when Lord Krishna told the Gopis: “As a matter of fact, I cannot repay your obligation to me even by strenuous efforts that I may be able to make over a long period of time lived by a heavenly being (i.e. for countless lives involving many births; or manifestations or incarnations in different forms). Indeed, your relation with me is pure and holy; it is free from tarnish and blemish of any kind. Your mind is focused entirely upon me so much so that it has cut through the fetter that usually ties it to the world and the body. Hence, let your virtuous devotion and love for me be a shine for the world for ever to come!”

Uddhav was so impressed by the Gopis’ pure devotion for Lord Krishna that he says in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurana, 10/47/61: “Oh my Blessed Ones (the Gopis)! Let me take rebirth as a shrub, a tree or even a creeper in Vrindavan so that I can catch or touch the dust of these blessed and lucky ladies while they roam around lost in the thoughts of their beloved Krishna, for they have so successfully walked on the path (of devotion) for Lord Krishna (that even the Lord thinks of none but them, thereby bridging the physical distance of geography that exists between the Lord and these Gopis by being united at the transcendental level of the soul). They (the Gopis) have so successfully treaded the difficult path (of God-realisation) that has been propounded by the Upanishads as they have reached their destination of Krishna Consciousness!”

In all sooth and without the least gainsay, the level of dedication, the intensity of love, the depth of devotion and the purity of thought that the Gopis had for Lord Krishna can be comprehended only by a spiritual aspirant who has reached a certain level of spiritual evolvment and exalted existence attained through awareness of the cosmic Consciousness.

The love of the Gopis for Lord Krishna is the easiest example to understand the Philosophy of Love with its profundity and depth in practical terms. True love is one that is selfless, it is a giver of joy, when one cheerfully sacrifices everything for the sake of the beloved, where there is bliss, ecstasy and elation but no trace of guilt or fear, and which is so profound and deep that with the passage of time it gets more and more robust and abiding so much so that physical distance has no meaning.

In the above discussion we have cited the example of the magnet pulling the iron pieces towards its own self. It is not the physical thing known as the magnet that attracts the iron pieces, but it is the magnet’s natural and inherent ‘magnetic field’ or quality known as ‘magnetism’ that pulls the iron pieces. This ‘magnetism’ or ‘magnetic field’ is subtle, invisible, powerful and indivisible, whereas the body of the ‘magnet’ is visible, gross and can be broken into smaller pieces.

We can’t see ‘magnetism’ but surely we know that it exists, and we also know that it is hidden somewhere subtly inside the body of the physical body of the ‘magnet’ which is visible to us. The true value of the ‘magnet’ lies in its virtue known as ‘magnetism’, and not in anything else.

Likewise, no one could visibly see the supreme cosmic Consciousness that was hidden inside the physical body of Lord Krishna; it is known as the ‘Krishna Consciousness’. It was this invisible and powerful force of the Supreme

Consciousness that was hidden in the body of Lord Krishna, i.e. the ‘Krishna Consciousness’, that pulled the individual Consciousness that was hidden in the bodies of the individual Gopis towards its own powerful Self just like the example of individual scattered iron pieces getting automatically pulled towards a powerful magnet. Therefore it is very important that one correctly and properly understands why the Gopis loved Lord Krishna, and why they were attracted to him, and why this love of the Gopis for Krishna is cited by sage Narad in the context of Bhakti for the Lord God.

Remember: Sage Narad was an exalted being and a sage who had practiced a life of total detachment and renunciation, i.e. a life of Vairagya and Sanyas, and he is credited for propounding the eclectic philosophy of Sanyas in an Upanishad named after him. This Upanishad is called ‘Narad Parivarjak Upanishad’, and it is the 8th Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition. It is beyond credulity to expect such an exalted and dispassionate sage of the stature of Narad to propose anything with an amorous tinge or taint especially when dealing with spiritual matters!

To wit, the love of the Gopis for Lord Krishna passed all the litmus tests of pure and un-adulterated love of the highest order. It was selfless love, there was no sense of guilt, the Gopis sacrificed everything at the altar of this love, it made them renounce everything else, it was deep and complete and untainted, and it became deeper and more profound with the passage of time. In all sooth and without gainsay, this is the true way a devotee should love his or her Lord God!]

२२ तत्रापि न माहात्म्यज्ञानविस्मृत्यपवादः

22 tatrāpi na māhātmya-jñāna-vismṛty-apavādaḥ

(22) But even there (i.e. in the case of the Gopis expressing their love for Lord Krishna), there is no notion of wrongdoing for they had not forgotten the greatness and the glories of the Lord.

[This is a very significant verse. It at once lays to rest wild speculations about the sort of love that the Gopis had for Lord Krishna. Was it infatuation; was it carnal desire for gratification of the senses? Absolute and resounding “No”, says the exalted, self-realised, wise and selfless sage Narad.

To wit, had there been an iota of blemish or taint in the Gopis’ love for Krishna, Narad would never ever have cited their example when talking about ‘Bhakti’ which is a subject directly related to the soul of the living being and the Supreme Soul of the creation, for Bhakti is a path that brings about spiritual bliss and fulfillment to the soul, a path that leads to eternal freedom from the cycle of birth and death, a path that provides liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the creature, a path that has been extolled even by the Vedas (original scriptures), and a pious and divine spiritual path of which Narad himself is an exponent.

So Narad emphasizes that when the Gopis loved Krishna, it was a pure form of love that spontaneously and naturally establishes an affinity between the Atma of a Jiva, the living being, to the exalted Supreme Atma of the Lord. This affinity is natural; this bond is natural; this kinship is natural.

Narad stresses the fact that though from the perspective of the gross world the love of the Gopis for Lord Krishna seemed to be a love between two persons, but it

was not a love at the plane of gross existence. It was love and affection that transcends barriers of the body and the grossness of existence. It was a sublime and ethereal form of love that inherently exists between the Jiva, the living being, and the Parmatma, the Supreme Being. It was the natural affinity between the Atma of the Gopis and their parent Atma in the form of Lord Krishna.

The following verse from the Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇa, 10/31/4 would clearly indicate that the Gopis knew who Lord Krishna actually was: “Surely you are not an ordinary son of some cowherd woman (i.e. Krishna’s mother Yashodha). You are a witness of the inner-self (heart with its emotions) and the mind (with its thoughts) of all living beings. [It is because you live inside all as their all-knowing Atma, the pure consciousness that is the true ‘self’ of all creatures.] You are adored even by the creator Brahma. Indeed, you have taken birth in the household of the Yadav clan for the purpose of protection of the world (by showing the path of Dharma, the right path that a person should lead when faced with dilemma and uncertainties in life).”

So therefore, Gopis’ love for Lord Krishna was an embodiment of Love for the Divine. It was love for pure consciousness embodied in the form of Lord Krishna. Gopis’ love for Lord Krishna is an allegory that brings to the fore the pure and practical way love for God can be expressed and practiced.]

२३ तद्विहीनं जाराणाम् इव

23 tad-vihīnaṁ jārāṇām iva

(23) Verily indeed, love for the Lord God without knowledge of the true nature and the divinity of the Lord is like love that one has for a paramour.

[Love of God without knowing the greatness of the Lord is like the gross form of love of an adulterous person, and this sort of love is profane, having nothing to do God-realisation.

Narad expressly lays to rest here any doubts one may have about why he has suggested Gopis’ love for Lord Krishna as a way to love the Lord God. For, if one loves any form of the Lord without the clear understanding that he is not loving any ordinary being but the cosmic Consciousness that is embodied in that particular form, then that love is better not done at all as it defiles the purity and the sanctity of the grand, glorious and holy institution of love itself; it tarnishes the virtue of love.

Love for God is not a gross form of expression of affection. It should be of the purest and the truest kind that originates from the heart where the Atma lives. This Atma itself is pure consciousness, and it would never endorse anything that is impure and corrupt. So, if the ‘love for the Lord God’ brings into play the Atma—if the love for the Lord is based on the natural affinity that the Atma of the individual has for the parent Atma known as the Parmatma that has been revealed in the form of the Lord God the person worships—then the worshipper is certain that his love for the Lord God is pure and spiritually fulfilling.

Even in the worldly form of love between two individuals, it is only when each of the lovers is aware of the true qualities and weaknesses of the other person that the love survives. Deceit and pretensions have no role in the field of sustained love.

If one cannot have this kind of love for the Lord God then all other forms of expression of love and affection that he may exhibit are simply pretensions to fool the world and his own self. They have no spiritual value.

Remember: Love for God and love for a paramour are as different as pure gold and a piece of iron with a golden colour.

In the context of this verse, refer to verse no. 28 of Narad Bhakti Sutra.]

२४ नास्त्य् एव तस्मिंस् तत्सुखसुखित्वम्

24 nāsty eva tasmims tat-sukha-sukhitvam

(24) In that form of love (i.e. the love for the paramour), the inherent virtue of pure love wherein the lover exults in the happiness of the beloved does not exist.

[In the purest form of love, both the lovers feel happy in the happiness of their beloved. It is a selfless kind of love. Happiness, contentedness and bliss are mutual. To wit, in the case of a person loving a paramour, he is only interested in deriving personal gratification, and is unconcerned about his lover's wishes or conveniences. In the profane kind of love that has an element of grossness in it, the lover wants to extract as much joy as he or she can from the partner, but is not at all bothered about his or her welfare.

On the other hand, true love demands total dedication and sensitivity on part of both the lovers. So, whereas the devotee serves his Lord God selflessly and submits himself totally to the Lord, keeping in mind that the pleasure of the Lord is his own pleasure, the Lord reciprocates this emotion by taking exceptional care of the devotee and ensuring that the devotee's welfare and happiness is his (Lord's) personal responsibility. This is totally unlike the love between paramours.

This said, sage Narad now expounds upon the supremacy of Bhakti as compared to other spiritual paths such as Karma (doing religious deeds), Gyan (acquisition of knowledge and enlightenment), and Yoga (meditation) in the verses that follow now.]

२५ सा तु कर्मज्ञानयोगेभ्योऽप्यधिकतरा

25 sā tu karma-jñāna-yogebhyo'py adhikatarā

(25) That (divine love and devotion as a spiritual practice leading to God-realisation) is a superior form of practice (or a better spiritual practice) as compared to Karma (doing religious and righteous deeds), Gyan (acquisition of true knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment about the 'self', i.e. about the pure consciousness) and Yoga (meditation as well as contemplation).

[The path of Karma, Gyan and Yoga are all conducive to God-realisation. Though they appear to be independent paths but at some point of time they coalesce into one another. It's like taking different highways to a particular city, but once one reaches that city all these highways merge into a single street or avenue that leads directly to

the final destination within the city where one was planning to go. Likewise, the main purpose of engaging in Karma, Yoga and Gyan is to achieve freedom from the cycle of birth and death and attain God-realisation. And this attainment gives eternal bliss and beatitude to the spiritual aspirant; he feels the same sense of fulfillment, thrill and joy that comes when one's love for his beloved is requited. In the spiritual field this is similar to the feeling experienced by a devotee who has developed the highest degree of devotion and love for his beloved Lord God.

Now we see here in this verse that sage Narad has affirmed that the path of love and devotion for Lord God is a better path and one that is superior to all other paths such as Karma, Gyan and Yoga that one pursues for God-realisation. On the face this assertion looks inconsistent with what the scriptures say on the subject because all these paths have been prescribed by the scriptures, and therefore all of them must be equally effective and correct. But it must be carefully noted here that besides the path of Karma, Gyan and Yoga the same scriptures have also prescribed the path of love and devotion (Bhakti) for God.

So what Narad actually means is obvious here—he means that though all the paths are equally good and effective, but out of all of them it is the path of Bhakti that is the simplest and the easiest to follow for a common man who finds other means of God-realisation arduous and cumbersome, because the path of Bhakti has no hassles and it is free from the fear of failure that dog other paths.

This fact has been endorsed in Ram Charit Manas as well. We read in its Lanka Kand, Doha no. 117 where Lord Shiva tells his consort Parvati: “Oh Uma, listen. Lord Ram is not pleased by other spiritual pursuits such as doing Yoga (meditation), Japa (repetition of holy formulas), Daan (making charity), Tapa (austerity and penance), and various types of Yagyas (fire and other religious sacrifices) as much as he is pleased by the single pursuit of pure and selfless ‘love’ for the Lord God (i.e. with Bhakti).”

Again, the exalted crow-saint Kaagbhusund asserts in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 115 while he was explaining the importance of Bhakti to Garud, the Mount of Lord Vishnu who had gone to him to hear spiritual discourse about Lord Ram, that: “A person who follows the path of Gyan instead of Bhakti (for God-realisation) is as stupid as a person who goes to the Aak tree (*Calotropis Gigantia* plant) in search of a liquid to drink even though he had the all wish-fulfilling cow called Kamdhenu present right inside his own home. Similarly, a person who abandons Bhakti and tries to find happiness elsewhere (or by following other methods) is like a fool who wishes to cross a huge ocean by attempting to swim across it instead of boarding a strong ship.”

Lord Krishna says in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 11/14/20-21 that “Neither doing meditation, nor Shankhya philosophy, nor righteousness, nor study of the Vedas, nor austerity or renunciation ever captivates me as much as Bhakti does. Verily indeed, it is only Bhakti that can enthrall me and hold me in its grasp. Sincere devotion for me is the remedy that can liberate even the most gravest of sinners and free them from the bad effects of the deeds done by them in their lives.”

Similarly, in Srimad Bhagvat Geeta, Canto 11, verse nos. 53-54, Lord Krishna tells Arjun: “You cannot see my cosmic form (as the four-armed Lord Vishnu) by the study of the Vedas, or by doing Tapa (austerity and penance), or by Daan (charity) or doing rituals even as you see me now. [This relates to the instance when Lord Krishna gave Arjun a glimpse of his cosmic all-encompassing vast form as the Viraat Purush.] Verily indeed, I can be seen in this form only with pure and single-minded devotion.

Not only seen, but my true form can be known and I can be realized by this single method of devotion.”

In the next verse no. 26, Narad gives the reason for preferring this method of ‘love and devotion for Lord God’ over other methods.]

२६ फलरूपत्वात्

26 phala-rūpatvāt

(26) (Devotion and love for Lord God, i.e. Bhakti, is superior—) Because it is in the nature of the Fruit (of all other spiritual methods; it is the culmination of the effort made for God-realisation by other spiritual paths as mentioned in verse no. 25).

[Sage Narad says that ‘devotion that is enriched by pure love of Lord God’ is the best form of spiritual practice as it leads easily and directly to God-realisation, which is the only goal of all other spiritual practices. But whereas other methods are strenuous and full of pitfalls, this path of Bhakti is hassle free and without any fear of falling.

The path of Karma gives satisfaction to the doer of righteous deeds; the path of Gyan makes a man wise and enlightened about the ‘self’ and the Atma and their pure conscious nature, and the path of Yoga helps to focus the mind on this pure consciousness so much so that the all fickleness of the mind is eliminated, it becomes calm and peaceful, and the spiritual aspirant enjoys the bliss of self-realisation. However, before the spiritual aspirant can enjoy the joy, peace, bliss and a sense of beatitude obtained at the end, he has to traverse a very difficult path full of hurdles and uncertainties. On the other hand, the path of Bhakti steers him clear of all hurdles and bumps on the way, and takes him to his desired destination in an enjoyable manner where he delights in every moment of his spiritual journey. It makes a big difference.

To wit, the experience of a sense of supreme peace, bliss, beatitude, felicity, fulfillment, joy and ecstasy that one encounters during the journey of Bhakti is not enjoyed by him if he takes other spiritual paths such as Karma, Gyan or Yoga to God-realisation, though of course these eclectic virtues are experienced by him but it is only when he has been totally successful in reaching his spiritual destination, but not earlier while he is still on these paths. And since these virtues listed herein above are what one hopes to get and aims for in all his endeavours, whether they pertain to the temporal or the spiritual world, it is safely said in this verse that “Bhakti—or the sense of total bliss, fulfillment and happiness that comes with developing love and devotion for the Lord God—is the culmination, or the ‘Fruit’, of all spiritual practices such as Karma, Gyan and Yoga”.

The aphorism stated in this verse is explicitly endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 126 where Lord Shiva asserts: “Pilgrimage to holy places and other means done for self-purification, perfection or attaining expertise in meditation and contemplation (Yoga), renunciation (Viraag), acquisition of true knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment (Gyan), doing sacred rites and religious practices (Karma and Dharma), keeping vows and doing charitable deeds (Vrat and Daan), practicing self-control and austerity (Sam and Dam), repeating holy formulas (Japa), doing various kinds of penances and fire

sacrifices (Tapa and Yagya), showing compassion to all living beings (Bhut Daya), doing service to Brahmins and one's Guru, study, modesty, wisdom, good character and nobility of mind etc., and all other exemplary virtues so much extolled in the Vedas—all of them have but one fruit, and it is to have devotion for Lord Hari (the Supreme Being)."

A person engages in any religious activity to have happiness, joy and peace for himself and liberation and deliverance for his soul, but none of the multifarious methods that he adopts to achieve this goal are as effective as the path of Bhakti. For verily indeed, it is 'Bhakti' with its inherent element of having love and devotion for Lord God that brings the practitioner closer to his spiritual goal faster and more easily than any other method he may follow. Bhakti gives an eternal sense of joy and bliss to the tormented soul of the creature like no other method gives.

No matter which path a person follows, the elements of 'commitment, devotion and faith' are necessary requirements to succeed in that path. 'Love' and 'devotion' infuse enthusiasm and single-minded focus in the practice of any spiritual or even a secular discipline one follows; otherwise a person becomes bored and his interest wanes with the passage of time. Bhakti incorporates all these glorious factors that are natural to it and inherently rolled into it as its basic characteristic. Hence, Bhakti is the superior path to God-realisation.

God-realisation becomes easy by Bhakti because if one simply has love for Lord God and is devoted to him completely, then it does not matter whether he does any thing or not. He need not do elaborate sacrifices, or subject his body to great hardship by doing meditation or going to long pilgrimages, or strain his finances by making charities and giving alms, or exert in studying the tomes of scriptures that he finds difficult to understand, or do Japa and Yoga if they prevent him from attending to the grind of life that requires him to pay attention to mundane affairs of the world, and so on and so forth. In Bhakti, a person can do whatever he wants with his physical body but still love his God dearly from the core of his heart.

We observe that even in a secular world, everything that is done with devotion and love becomes beautiful and endearing as compared to a thing done without interest, commitment and enthusiasm.]

२७ ईश्वरस्याप्य् अभिमानिद्वेषित्वाद् दैन्यप्रियत्वाच् च

27 īśvarasyāpy abhimāni-dveṣitvād dainya-priyatvāc ca

(27) God (īśvara) does not like egotism and pride, but like humility and simplicity.

[This verse implies that the Lord does not like ego and pride in his devotee. A Bhakta is humble and docile because he knows that he does not have the ability to reach God on the strength of his Karma (reward of excellent deeds), Gyan (wisdom, knowledge and expertise in spiritual matters) or Yoga (meditation and contemplation as well as the different observations such as self-control, penance, austerity, renunciation etc. that are part of the path of Yoga). Hence, Bhakti is the path that is preferred by God and liked by him over other paths leading to him.

A person who relies on his good deeds (Karma) would have some trace of pride in him, thinking "Oh, I am sure to attain freedom from the cycle of birth and death because I have accumulated sufficient religious merit by doing countless

auspicious and religious deeds, such as doing so many charities, fire sacrifices, going on pilgrimage, and so on and so forth”. Similarly, a man of knowledge and wisdom also thinks “Oh, I know the correct path, I know what the Truth about life and God is, and no one can tell me better what to do and how to reach my spiritual destination”. Likewise, one who does Yoga thinks “Oh, I have practiced meditation, I do contemplation, I focus on my Atma and pure consciousness, I have been able to attain freedom from the gross body by liberating my Atma from its fetters through meditation and other means of Yoga such as breath-control, self-control over the mind and the sense organs, and so on and so forth”.

In all the above cases there is some trace of ego and pride involved imperceptibly. But a Bhakta (devotee of Lord God) knows that he is totally dependent upon the grace of the Lord God for his welfare and happiness, for he is well aware about his own limitations, he knows that he lacks the wherewithal for obtaining spiritual well-being. Therefore a Bhakta (devotee) would have no trace of ego and pride in him, and that is why he is loved by the Lord God more than a person who follows the path of Karma, Gyan or Yoga to God-realisation.

Those who follow these latter paths of Karma, Gyan and Yoga feel superior and better placed to attain liberation and deliverance, so the Lord leaves them to face their fate on the strength of their own successes. As for a person who follows the path of Bhakti, the Lord pays special attention to him because he knows that this person is totally dependent upon him, and should he fail it would be a failure of the Lord to do his duty towards his dependant!

Caution must be exercised not to misinterpret this verse to mean that the Lord God prefers total love and devotion for him over all other paths that lead to him because the Lord is biased and ego-centric in as much as he would prefer to show his grace upon someone who pampers him the most and is ready to become his servant by totally surrendering himself to God. No, it is not that at all as is clear in the above discussion.

A similar idea as expressed in this verse is expounded in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 74 where the saintly-crow Kaagbhusund says: “Listen to the innate habit and natural disposition of Lord Ram: he never tolerates the negative trait of ‘Abhimaan’ (pride, ego) in his followers and subordinates (i.e. his devotees). The reason is that ‘Abhiman’ is at the root of one getting entangled in the gross mortal world of transmigration, and this negative traits causes immense and interminable suffering, grief, misery and pain to a creature. This is the reason the most merciful Lord removes this negative trait from his devotees and followers (“*sēvaka*”) immediately as the Lord has exceptional affection for them and would do everything to protect them from any harm.”

In Tulsidas’ excellent Book of Prayers, the same idea is expressed in its verse no. 101 that says: “Where else should I go to take refuge except the lotus-like feet of Lord Ram? Who else is known in the world as the redeemer of the fallen? To whom a humble creature is as dear as he is to Lord Ram?”]

२८ तस्या ज्ञानम् एव साधनम् इत्यु एके

28 tasyā jñānam eva sādhanam ity eke

(28) Some wise men are of the view that ‘Gyan’ (gnosis; knowledge of the Truth; wisdom; enlightenment) is the only path to attain that (God-realisation; devotion for Lord God). To wit, knowledge is the means to have devotion; it is an instrument for developing devotion.

[It is surely true that knowledge is an essential ingredient to have firm devotion and love for Lord God. It is because only when one is sure about the divinity and greatness of the Lord as the redeemer and the Supreme Being will he be able to have unwavering faith in the Lord and be sincerely devoted and dedicated to him. In this context refer to verse no. 23 and its accompanying note.

To understand this principle—that one must know the ‘truth of God’ if one is expected to develop firm faith, devotion and love for the Lord God—we can take a very simple example. Suppose someone tells us to love XYZ. Our first reaction would be to know who this person is. How can one love, serve or be dedicated to someone who is not known, or is too vague to be loved, served and devoted to? May be this person XYZ is a rascal or an enemy. Who would love such a person? Hence, the identity and the good qualities of someone to be loved, served, devoted to and revered must be clearly known.

There is another point. It may be that XYZ is a very nice person in his own right; he is great, possesses excellent qualities and is learned. But suppose that inspite of all his goodness he may not be of any help or good to us; we may not derive any personal benefit by serving him or adoring him. Then will it be practical for any man to develop a natural sense of love or devotion for this gentleman known as XYZ? Obviously the answer is ‘No’.

This applies to the Lord God also. It is easy for a devotee to be faithful in his devotion and love for Lord God if he knows about the excellent attributes of his Lord, if he is certain that the Lord will stand by him in thick and thin, that the Lord would ensure freedom for him from all his worldly torments and miseries, that the Lord will give him solace and succour, that the Lord is his greatest selfless friend and redeemer.

To wit, some certified good and reassuring information is necessary for love and devotion for anyone to be steady and grow over time as well as to withstand the storm of doubt and misgivings. This basic need applies to the relationship between the devotee and his Lord God.

The more one learns about the greatness and divinity of the Lord God by acquiring knowledge about him through the hearing and study of the scriptures or from the Lord’s stories and glories as they are narrated by saints and sages, the more robust and steady would devotion and love for God become. Knowledge gives steadiness, firmness, strength of conviction, and depth of faith in the path of Bhakti for Lord God.

This principle is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 89 where it is said: “Without knowledge one would not have sufficient level of faith and conviction for the Lord (or it would be difficult to sustain them even if one manages to develop these virtues inside him for some time). And without having faith, it is difficult to have affection for the Lord. Without faith and affection, it is impossible to have steady Bhakti or devotion for the Lord. It is like the case of lubricity caused by water for it is only a temporary thing, because as soon as the water dries up the lubricity too vanishes.”]

29 anyonyāśrayatvam ity eke

(29) Other wise men are of the view that Bhakti (devotion) and Gyan (knowledge; gnosis) are dependent upon one another.

[Knowledge of anything is essential to make one's faith and commitment to anything stable and robust. If one does not know about the destination he is headed to, if one does not know path he must take to reach this destination and its pitfalls and precautions that must be taken, if one does not know that the path as well as the destination he has chosen for himself is the best one suited for his own good, he will be overcome with uncertainty and fear. This will prove counter-productive and ruinous for him.

So knowledge of the spiritual Truth, of the reality of the Lord God, and practice of devotion should be done simultaneously as they complement each other. Remember: Devotion without sufficient knowledge would be blind faith which would certainly be open to doubting and confusion which would serve no purpose for the spiritual aspirant. A devotee must study the scriptures and acquaint himself with correct knowledge so that his spiritual path becomes free from hurdles and he can walk on it with full confidence. This fact has been highlighted in verse nos. 12-13, 23, 76.

This observation will be also be obvious and convincing when we read it with what is said in verse no. 28 herein above. Knowledge about the truth, the greatness and the power of an entity fosters and cements one's faith, respect and devotion for that entity. Knowledge or awareness about who the object of our worship and adoration is and his or her unique virtues that had caught our attention in the first place only go to enhance and strengthen our love for the beloved; it makes love robust and sustainable. This ignites a desire to learn more about the entity loved, especially how we could benefit from our association with that entity. After all, it is a natural instinct of all living beings that they are driven by some sort of self-interest, and this applies to a spiritual aspirant as well, albeit this self-interest of his is related to the spiritual field, and not to any of the affairs of the world.

Hence, knowledge of the greatness, the holiness, the divinity and the cosmic powers of the Lord God, the knowledge that the Lord whom the spiritual aspirant worships and pays his obeisance to is the great Redeemer and the Almighty Supreme Being of creation only goes to increase the devotee's faith, devotion and commitment to him.

This knowledge firmly establishes in the mind of the devotee that the Lord God whom he loves, worships, is devoted to and pays his obeisance to is the 'Lord' of this creation, he is 'God' who is the 'Lord' of all and the only Redeemer. This knowledge instills confidence in the heart of the devotee as he moves ahead with steady steps on his spiritual journey.

For instance, when a person comes to know that the Supreme Being, the Lord God, had manifested himself in the body of Lord Ram for the good of his devotees, and that this form of the Supreme Being is easy to relate to in this world than the Lord's cosmic form known as 'Brahm' that is invisible, without attributes and beyond comprehension of the mind, then that person develops an abiding interest in Lord Ram because he realizes that the Lord represents the Supreme Being who is the ultimate receiver of his worship and homage. He begins to see Lord Ram as a

redeemer of his soul, as his true spiritual friend. The Lord thus becomes the focus of his devotion and love. There are other Lords and Masters in this world whom the person meets in his life, but once he realizes that Lord Ram is the Supreme Being and his true redeemer and spiritual friend, he abandons all other Lords and Masters and dedicates himself exclusively to serving and worshipping Lord Ram. For this devotee, the ‘knowledge of who Lord Ram actually is’ was pivotal in his establishing firmness of faith, devotion and love for the Lord.

So whereas there are other spiritual paths for God-realisation, such as Yoga (meditation), Dhyan (contemplation), Tapa (penance and austerity), Sam and Dam (practicing self-restraint and dispassion), Vairagya (renunciation), Yagya (doing sacrifices), Daan (making charities), Dharma (leading an auspicious and righteous way of life), Karma (doing right deeds), and so on and so forth, a devotee discovers that the path of Bhakti is the easiest for him as it has next-to-nothing in the form of hassles, troubling obstacles and so many contradictory situations that create hordes of dilemmas for a spiritual aspirant, and is also free from the fear of failure.

The emphasis of this verse is that there exists a spiritual harmony between ‘Gyan’ that pertains to the acquisition of knowledge of the Truth, and ‘Bhakti’ that pertains to having faith and devotion for that Truth as it is revealed in the form of the Lord God whom the devotee loves, worships and prays to. They are complimentary to each other, and not in opposition. ‘Knowledge’ only adds meaning and substance to a person’s spiritual endeavours in life in the form of ‘devotion and love for Lord God’. The greater is the awareness of the correctness of the path chosen and its effectiveness in fulfilling one’s spiritual objectives, the greater is one’s commitment to and devotion towards this path. Otherwise a spiritual aspirant may fall prey to the fear of uncertainties that would deter him from walking ahead with firm and steady steps towards his spiritual destiny.

So we conclude that Gyan (knowledge) adds depth and commitment to Bhakti (devotion); and Bhakti lends beauty and charm to Gyan. To wit, Bhakti sans Gyan will be like a blind person walking on a path that he knows not where it will take him; and Gyan lacking Bhakti will be a rough, arduous, cumbersome and boring spiritual path that will be energy-sapping, easily prone to failures, and like a burden upon the soul.]

३० स्वयं फलरूपेति ब्रह्मकुमारः

30 svayaṁ phala-rūpeti brahma-kumārah

(30) According to the (mind-born) sons of the creator Brahma (who were known as Sanat Kumars and were brothers of sage Narad), it (Bhakti) is a fruit by itself; it is a complete spiritual reward in its own right.

[Refer also to verse no. 26 herein above.

The aim of all endeavours that a person engages in is to attain happiness and peace for himself, and from the spiritual perspective it is to attain eternal bliss and beatitude for his soul. Bhakti provides him both; it fulfills all his wishes from the perspective of worldly life as well as spiritual life. And so it is said that ‘Bhakti is a fruit that is complete in itself’. Other methods require some sort of sacrifice to be made by the spiritual aspirant.

For instance, if he chooses the path of Yoga (meditation) for fulfillment of his spiritual desires then he would have to lead a very strict life, adhere to all the disciplines of Yoga and fulfill all its requirements in order to have any gain. It's a very tough path and the follower of this path will have to forgo all the basic comforts and pleasures of life. On the other hand, Bhakti is a very liberal path, a path that does not expect a person to subject himself to undue stress and hardships. It is an enjoyable path full of love and bliss. Say, when a person is given a choice between two or more ways of arriving at his chosen destination, which would he like to choose—a simple path that does not put him to unnecessary inconveniences, or a path that leaves him tired and worn-out? The same logic applies to either following the path of Bhakti or any of the other paths for spiritual attainment and God-realisation.

The observation made in this verse, that 'Bhakti is a complete reward for spiritual endeavours' is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 16 where Lord Ram has told Laxman, his younger brother: "I am easily influenced and mellowed by Bhakti which also grants immense joy and pleasure to my devotees. It stands by its self; it requires no other props or support; it is self-sustaining and self-sufficient. On the other hand, both Gyan (gnosis; knowledge of the true nature of God and the 'self' both of which are pure consciousness) and Vigyan (empirical knowledge; to be able to discern between the formed and unformed variants of the Lord God) depend upon Bhakti (in the sense that unless one is deeply interested in and devoted to his spiritual path, one would not take much trouble to acquire Gyan and have Vigyan of the Lord God as it would be too much of a bother for him)".

'Bhakti' stands for love of Lord God. This love is spontaneous and it represents the natural pull that exists between the devotee's Atma, his pure conscious soul, and the Supreme Atma or the cosmic Consciousness embodied in the form of the Lord God the devotee loves and worships. As has been explained earlier by the example of the magnet and its magnetism where the magnet attracts countless iron pieces towards its own self without the need of any other external powers or force to do so, this love and devotion that develops between the devotee and the Lord God is natural and spontaneous. It does not need anything of power to support it. While on the other hand, Gyan needs a lot of diligence and study of the scriptures, as well as a lot of concentration upon the Atma in order to be successful and being convinced of the actual existence of God.]

३१—३२ राजगृहभोजनादिषु तथैव दृष्टत्वात्
न तेन राजपरितोषः क्षुच्छान्तिर् वा

31-32 rāja-gr̥ha-bhojanādiṣu tathaiva dr̥ṣṭatvāt (31)

na tena rāja-paritoṣaḥ kṣuc-chāntir vā (32)

(31-32) This principle is observed in practice in the dinner that is served in the royal household of a king. (31)

The knowledge (of the cook as to how a dish is prepared) will neither please the king nor satisfy his hunger. (32)

[This example is very interesting. It fits in well with what has been said earlier in verse nos. 29 and 30. We shall now proceed to examine these two verses from different angles as follows:-

(a) A cook of the royal kitchen may be an expert in his field, but what matters is not his culinary knowledge but how he actually prepares and serves the dish to the king that would please the king. Similarly, the cook's knowledge of the way a dish is prepared and served won't satisfy his own hunger unless he actually eats it.

If the cook, or for that matter any other member of the royal household, actually wants to get the king's favour, he would serve the food to the king with great show of respect and cheerfulness so much so that the king feels that his servant is eager to serve him with sincerity and pleasure. Towards this end the cook should also know the preferences of taste of the king, his likes and dislikes, so that he can prepare such food that would automatically please the king.

Even if the king is not hungry, but if the food of his choice is placed before him with due affection on the part of the cook to ensure that the king does not go hungry, then it usually happens that the king would eat some of it because the very sight of his favourite dish would stoke his latent hunger which might have been subdued due to some worry of the state. Obviously, such a cook will become the king's favourite. He will gradually come close to the king and gain his trust and attention. To wit, a servant can get into the good books of his lord and master if he serves the latter faithfully, diligently, with due affection and without deceit. If a servant is eager to serve his master or lord selflessly and to ensure that the latter's happiness is taken care of then it is sure that this servant will be preferred over others who are also employed by the lord or the master. In return to the servant's faithful and dedicated service, the king, the lord or the master will be mindful that this servant is well looked after.

In the example cited above it will be observed that it won't matter to the king if his favourite servant is an expert in some technical field or not as long as the servant knows the king's likings, if he knows what pleases the king and how to keep him in good humour, and if he is available at the beck-and-call of the king and cheerfully serves him even if it means personal discomfort to the servant.

So we find that the two things—knowledge of the king's habits and preferences, as well as the servant's desire to serve the king faithfully, diligently and cheerfully—are what helps to develop a special bonding between the king and his servant. But mere possession of some technical knowledge, or any knowledge other than about the king's preferences, his likes and dislikes, his habits and nature, do not play any direct pivotal role in the establishment of an enduring bond between the king and his servant. At the most, if the servant has some especial quality in him, he will find a place in the king's retinue of servants, but the king's actual favour depends on different issues as pointed out herein above.

The same principle applies to Bhakti and Gyan vis-à-vis the devotee and his relationship with the Lord God. If the devotee loves his Lord God and serves him diligently, devotedly and selflessly then the latter would develop a kind spot in his heart for the former. Similarly, if the devotee knows only one thing, that his well-wisher is his Lord God and no one else in this world, then his devotion and love for the latter would be firm and sincere. So 'knowledge of the Lord God' and 'devotion for the Lord God' surely go hand in hand, but at the same time mere knowledge is not enough if there is no devotion involved in this relationship!

So we see that the above explanation fits in well with the principle propounded in verse no. 29 herein above—which says that “knowledge as well as devotion and love for Lord God go hand-in-hand, and are dependent upon each other”. It also fits in well with what has been said in verse no. 30 that “that devotion and love for the Lord God is self-sufficient to please the latter”.

(b) One other way of reading these two verses is as follows: “A king is not happy by merely having knowledge of how his palace was built. Similarly, a man’s appetite is not satisfied by just looking at the food or having knowledge of how it is prepared or about its ingredients.”

To wit, technical knowledge of how the palace was constructed is of no use to the king; what matters to him is how he enjoys living inside it. He loves his palace for its own sake because it is his own living area. Similarly, mere metaphysical and theological knowledge does not give satisfaction to a spiritual aspirant as much as the bliss obtained by having love and devotion for the Lord God does.

Again, just like knowledge of food or its taste won’t satisfy hunger unless the food is eaten, knowledge of God is useless till one experiences the bliss and beatitude that comes with God-realisation.

(c) There is another way of interpreting these two verse nos. 31-32. Suppose a person is invited to dinner by the king. This is a great honour in its own right as far as the person is concerned. Obviously the king will not invite someone towards whom he has not been favourably inclined to come inside the palace and sit with him for dinner. It does not matter then who cooks the food, what kind of food it is, and how it is served. So ‘knowledge’ becomes redundant. What is important is the ‘affection’ or the ‘personal attraction or affinity’ that has for some reason sprouted between the king and the invitee. May be it was some special service the person had done directly to the king, or may be the king had observed that this particular person is very devoted and loyal to him and has been serving him indirectly by his actions and words.

As far as the person is concerned, the knowledge of what dish is being served or how it was cooked is absolutely immaterial and irrelevant. What matters for him is that the king is favourably inclined towards him; the king is his friend. And for the king, what matters is the person’s loyalty and devotion for him and not the level of knowledge or the wealth that the person has.

So therefore, what matters to the Lord God is that his devotee has affection and devotion for him, and what matters to the devotee is that his Lord God loves him and cares for him! All other knowledge becomes redundant and irrelevant.

Refer Srimad Bhagvat Geeta, Canto 9, verse nos. 29 where Lord Krishna says: “I am present in all living beings in a universal manner (in the form of their Atma, the pure consciousness known as their true self). All are equally dear to me; I hate none nor favour anyone. However, those who worship me with dedication, they live in my heart and I in theirs (i.e. they experience my presence in the subtle space of their heart in the form of bliss that sprouts from self-realisation, for it is me who is revealed in this blessed form—and therefore all physical distances between my ardent devotee and me are erased).”

Remember: Mere knowledge of the ingredients of a meal, no matter how tasty it may be, won’t satisfy hunger; it is only when we actually eat that meal that the pangs of hunger are satisfied. A hungry man would relish even an ordinary meal as compared to a man who is already bloated, for the latter won’t enjoy a spoon of a dish no matter how delicious it is. To wit, a spiritual aspirant who is eager to reach his

spiritual destination, who wishes to attain his Lord God, will enjoy having devotion and love for the Lord instead of getting involved in studying huge tomes of scriptures to gain metaphysical and theological knowledge.

(d) The most important point to be noted in the above discussion is that knowledge, service, devotion and love for the Lord God are all equally important and have a role to play in the beginning, for they all help the spiritual aspirant to reach his destination. But ultimately it is the bliss and ecstasy that is experienced by realizing the Lord in the form of the ‘self’ known as the Atma of the aspirant himself that is more important for him. Once God-realisation and self-realisation fructifies, knowledge and other accessories become redundant and irrelevant for the devotee, for now he begins to revel in the joy of loving his beloved Lord. The idea is to warn that mere intellectual pursuit is not enough in the spiritual path if one lacks devotion and commitment to it.

Remember: All the water in a mighty river won’t produce electricity if it were not contained in a dam and then concentrated at a focal point which turns the dynamo that actually produces the electricity. So therefore, all the body of knowledge, all study of metaphysics, theology and religion, all the efforts made to pursue different methods for one’s spiritual evolverment, and all the reading of the scriptural tomes—every thing is useless if a person can’t attain God-realisation with its attendant bliss, joy, beatitude and felicity.]

३३ अस्मात् सैव ग्राह्या मुमुक्षुभिः

33 asmāt saiva grāhyā mumukṣubhiḥ

(33) Therefore, those who aspire to attain complete liberation and deliverance for themselves (from worldly bondages; those who wish to attain emancipation and salvation for their soul—known as “Moksha”, and to become God-realised so that they can attain eternal beatitude and felicity)—verily indeed, they ought to (exclusively) adopt the path of devotion and love (Bhakti) for the Lord God. [To wit, Bhakti is the best path prescribed for a spiritual aspirant out of the numerous paths described in the scriptures.]

[In the context of this verse, refer to verse no. 81 of this book Narad Bhakti Sutra which explicitly reiterates this fundamental spiritual truth.

Bhakti is the spiritual path that would help the aspirant to find liberation and deliverance from all the fetters that shackle their soul to this mundane gross world—because Bhakti leads them to God-realisation, which effectively means that they have become ‘self-realised’. This is because once they attain a spiritual stature that elevates them to the same plane of existence where the Lord God exists they come to realize that it is a transcendental state of existence of the pure Consciousness. This ‘pure Consciousness’ is a universal, cosmic, all-pervading and an eternal entity that exists in the form of the Atma of the individual living being, in this case the ‘devotee’, as well as in the form of the Parmatma, the supreme Atma that is embodied in the form of the Lord God. No distinction or differentiation actually exists between the Atma and the Parmatma except that the former is revealed in the form of the countless creatures in this creation while the latter is revealed in the form of the one and the only Lord God.

So the Bhakta, the devotee, comes to understand the true meaning of God-realisation: i.e. that ‘he’ is not the gross physical body that has to endure all the torments associated with the cycle of birth and death, but ‘he’ is actually the pure conscious Atma that is a counterpart of the Parmatma, the Lord God ‘he’ so much loves and reveres. To wit, the devotee begins to love his ‘own self’ because he realizes that the latter is actually a revelation of the Lord God whom he loves so much. In this state of transcendental existence, all differences and all distances between the two are erased.

Hence upon God-realisation the devotee frees himself from all the fetters of spiritual delusions and ignorance. He finds liberation from the world inasmuch as the world and its material charms no longer seem attractive to him and they no longer bind him in fetters of temptations; he derives no joy and comfort and pleasure in this world; he loses complete interest in this world. On the other hand, he begins to revel in the bliss and ecstasy of ‘God-realisation’ that translates into his being ‘self-realised’ and ‘freed from all delusions and ignorance’ pertaining to life in this gross perishable and mundane world.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 119 that says: “The Vedas, the Tantras and the wise sages have declared that the supreme state of transcendental existence is very difficult to obtain. But by worshipping Lord Ram, the same state of supreme bliss, beatitude and felicity comes without even asking for it.”]

३४ तस्याः साधनानि गायन्त्य् आचार्याः

34 tasyāḥ sādhanāni gāyanty ācāryāḥ

(34) [In the following verses we read about the various means or ways by practicing which a Bhakta (devotee) can achieve success in Bhakti (devotion).]

The (different) learned teachers and scholars of this field (“ācāryāḥ”#) have enumerated (literally ‘sung’; “gāyanty”*) the various ways or means by which one can achieve success in Bhakti¹.

[#The word “ācāryāḥ” means a learned teacher or a scholar in some field who knows his field well and himself practices what he preaches. The life of such a teacher is an example by itself. The disciple finds it easy to follow the path advocated by the teacher because he can see how to actually practice it in life. Further, the disciple is easy to be persuaded because he can witness the grand virtues of the path preached by his teacher as he can see its rewards first hand.

*These learned teachers have “sung” (gāyanty) the various paths of Bhakti. The word “sung” means that they enjoyed very much telling others about this eclectic spiritual path and the sense of ecstasy that they experienced themselves. So they enjoy recalling their own experiences in this field and rejoice that they are able to share them with others so that they too can derive the same joy and beatitude over time. They never get tired of helping others in this noble path; they would cheerfully hand-hold others in this spiritual field.

¹Sage Narad has extolled the essential virtues and characteristics of Bhakti till now and has affirmed that it is superior to the path of Gyan (acquisition of spiritual knowledge by various means, such as study of the scriptures etc.) and Karma (doing righteous deeds and getting involved in religious activities to attain one's spiritual objectives). Refer to verse nos. 15-20, 28-30, and 33.

Now he tells us how Bhakti can be practiced in life. He enumerates the various ways by which Bhakti or devotion and love for the Lord God can sprout and be developed in one's bosom. For this he cites learned teachers and scholars who were well-versed in this field and had extensive experience of how to be successful in Bhakti. Their methods or advice can be used as standards in this field.

It ought to be noted here that 'love' is an important constituent or factor of Bhakti, and 'love' sprouts spontaneously in the bosom of the lover for the beloved. Love need not be learnt through any text book, nor does it have any fixed system that is to be followed. But the problem of developing 'pure devotional love for the Lord God' that arises in the spiritual field is because the Atma, the 'self' of the living being, has been conditioned to think and behave in a particular way for many generations through the cycle of birth and death. For example, the creature is naturally attracted towards the charms and pleasures of the gross mundane world and its material things, and he begins to love the world instinctively. But if he is told to renounce this natural sense of love which also gratifies his sense organs, he will find it very difficult. Water has a natural tendency to go downhill or it flows easily on an even ground, but to move uphill on a slope almost impossible for it in the natural way. The only means to make this happen is to pull it up by some force.

This is what is meant here. It is easy for a creature to have, or develop, a sense of love for self gratification and attraction for the material things of this world which are easy for him to acquire, but it is quite difficult for him to love an entity that seems far from him and does not give immediate gratification to his sense organs, such as is the case with Lord God. Though of course the stupid creature forgets that the sense of joy and pleasure that he derives in loving and being devoted to the gross world are transient and lacking in substance, that they keep him trapped in an endless cycle of birth and death and its whirlpool of miseries and grief, while if the same effort is made to develop love and affection for the Lord God and one pursues this path with due devotion and commitment then the rewards are astounding, and the quality of bliss and happiness got are unmatched as they are of a divine and sublime nature.

It is this latter path of love and devotion for the Lord God (known as Bhakti) that Narad talks about now. He tells us how to follow this path and practice Bhakti. It is called "Bhakti Saadhana", the 'practice of devotion for the Lord God'.

The 'conditioned soul' has to make an effort and practice a new method which it is not accustomed to in order to change its natural habits and inclinations. Therein comes the importance of guidance by learned and experienced teachers in the field of Bhakti—they show the creature the practical way to practice Bhakti as a means of attaining God-realisation and spiritual fulfillment with its attendant bliss and beatitude after breaking free from the fetters of attachment to the gross mundane world with its material charms.

One cannot follow two paths at the same time. Is it not said: "if a person has a leg in one boat and the other leg in another boat, then he is bound to sink midstream". So therefore, if one wishes to follow Bhakti then he must renounce the world. This fact is clearly stressed in the next verse no. 35.]

३५ तत् तु विषयत्यागात् सङ्गत्यागाच्च

35 tat tu viṣaya-tyāgāt saṅga-tyāgāc ca

(35) That Bhakti is successfully accomplished by (physically) renouncing worldly objects and attachment with them (at the emotional and intellectual level; the level involving the heart and the mind). [To wit, Bhakti has to be practiced with due diligence, sincerity and commitment if it is to be successful.]

[As has been noted in the discussion of verse no. 34 herein above, a creature has a natural habit of associating himself with the world and its sense objects. The pure self of a Jiva, the creature, is the Atma, his soul that is pure consciousness. This ‘self’ of the creature is a fount of joy, bliss and love as it is pure consciousness and an image of the supreme Self that represents cosmic Consciousness embodied in the form of the Lord God. But this natural fount of joy, bliss and love has become choked by its association with a world that is gross by its inherent nature and a fount of miseries and grief. But the creature becomes so engrossed in this world by deriving superficial pleasure from its sense objects that it forgets that there lies another source that would give him eternal sense of happiness and bliss. Once the creature is made aware of this source by a learned teacher, and he sees first hand how the teacher experiences a steady flow of joy and bliss by following this path, he (the creature) would be motivated to emulate it himself. He realizes that his love for the world and its material objects have so vitiated the environment for him that unless he completely abandons it there is no chance or hope of attaining abiding peace and happiness.

To begin with, the creature feels enjoyment in the material world, so he loves it and becomes devoted to it. But once he learns that there is a better source of enjoyment that gives sustainable rewards, and better still, that this enjoyment is sublime by nature as compared to the enjoyment of the world which is gross by nature, the creature would then be automatically motivated to pursue the latter path. So the creature would abandon his attachment with the world, and instead follow the spiritual path of God-realisation.

Towards this end of God-realisation he must turn away from the world and its illusionary charm, to stop his association with them—i.e. practice renunciation. To wit, he must stop loving the world; he must stop being devoted to the world in order to fulfill the needs of his instincts for self-gratification of his sense organs. This is to be done at the physical level of the body as well as the mental and emotional level.

It is important to divert the mind away from world and towards the Lord God if one wishes to experience the sense of exceptional bliss and beatitude that is attained by manifestation of the Divine Being.

The mind cannot work with full capacity on two things at the same time. So it is only when it is free from the world that it can concentrate on the Divine aspect of life symbolized by Bhakti.

It is said in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇa, 11/14/27: “The mind of a person dwelling on the objects of the world gets hooked or attached with them, while the mind of a person who contemplates upon me (Lord God) gets absorbed in my thoughts and attains nearness with me.” The mind gets attached with whatever it is thinking. If it thinks of the world it gets attached to the world; if it thinks of the Lord God it gets attached with the Lord.

In the epic Mahabharat, Shanti Parva, 162/17 it is said: “Renunciation means both the physical abandonment of the objects of enjoyment in this world and stop being associated with them at the mental level.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 324 it is said: “The blessed ones are those who are exclusively devoted to Lord Ram and renounce all attractions for material wealth and its splendorous charm as if it was vomit.”

A person can't say that he seriously thinks of one thing while his mind is focused on something else. So therefore, once a person honestly renounces the world, his mind would learn to be disassociated with it too. Both these two things go hand-in-hand.

The supreme form of Bhakti is total renunciation of the world and its sense objects, and diversion of the efforts of the mind to contemplating on the Lord God who represents the Truth and the pure Consciousness. The objects of the senses in the world are those that attract their respective sense organs of the body, such as the ear which likes to hear pleasant sounds, the nose that likes to smell fragrant things, the tongue that likes to taste sweet things, the eyes that like to see charming things, and the skin that derives pleasure by touching sensual things. So therefore, as has been stressed in the beginning of this present verse, one must totally disassociate oneself from all these things not only at the physical level but at the mental level as well if one wants to have true Bhakti established inside the bosom. The reason is that if only the physical body and its sense organs are restrained from getting attracted and attached to their respective objects in the external world but the mind still remains hooked to them then it is as good as doing nothing. This situation would only increase the longing for these objects, and result in unwarranted stress and endless restlessness. But if the mind is trained to renounce these objects and the heart is trained not to get emotionally involved in them, then a deep sense of tranquility and bliss prevails, which situation is conducive to Bhakti. This renunciation cleanses the inner-self of the spiritual aspirant and prepares it to give space to Bhakti. Two opposite things can't co-exist, like darkness and light are incompatible with each other.]

३६ अव्यावृत्तभजनात्

36 avyāvṛttabhajanāt

(36) [True Bhakti and renunciation of the world can be successfully done by—] Continuous and uninterrupted ‘Bhajan’ (which acts as an aide to development of Bhakti.

[What is “Bhajan”? This term has a broad meaning and includes the following: it is the remembrance of the Lord and singing his glories; it is chanting or repeating his divine name; it is adoring the Lord and praising him; it is worshipping him; it is keeping the mind fixed on the Lord God and driving all other thoughts away. To wit, one must ceaselessly think of the Lord God by focusing his mind on the Lord's form, glories, name, attributes, mysteries, mystical powers, divinity, and listening to his stories that narrate the many deeds done by the Lord during his many manifestations. So we see that ‘Bhajan’ takes many practical forms.

In the beginning, Bhajan is to be employed as a means to attain success in Bhakti—because it helps a devotee to remove his mind from all other things and train it to think of the Lord God exclusively. Later on when success has been achieved, then Bhajan becomes a natural habit for the devotee—for he remembers the Lord God every moment of his existence, and revels in the bliss and joy derived from this remembrance.

It is said in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 122: “It may be remotely possible to extract clarified butter (known as Ghee) by churning water, or oil by crushing sand particles (like one can extract oil by crushing the seeds of sesame or any other oil-bearing plant)—but it is absolutely impossible to cross this vast and intractable ocean-like world of transmigration without worshipping (and having devotion for) Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Ram). This is an inviolable principle, and there is no exception to it.”

Therefore, the practice of doing Bhajan is indispensable for success in Bhakti.

And, how should Bhajan be done? Lord Krishna told Arjun in Srimad Bhagvat Geeta, Canto 8, verse no. 14: “Listen Arjun! A Yogi (practitioner of meditation and contemplation) who always thinks of me in an uninterrupted way, who focuses his mind exclusively upon me, is sure to find me as I become easily attainable by him (i.e. I reveal myself to him in my sublime form as ‘pure consciousness’ that is perceivable only at the subtle level of the mind).”

It is said in sage Patanjali’s classic treatise on Yoga, called Yoga Darshan, 1/14, that “Success in any practice is possible if it is done regularly and with due commitment and faith for a long period of time”.

Even in the world it is observed that a person achieves success in any work by regular and diligent practice even though that work may seem very daunting to him in the beginning. Practice makes a man perfect in any thing. What seems an effort in the beginning becomes a means of joy by practice. So likewise, Bhajan becomes a source of extreme joy and pleasure as time passes.

In the context of this verse that deals with the theme of “Bhajan”, refer also to verse no. 79.]

३७ लोकेऽपि भगवद्गुणश्रवणकीर्तनात्

37 loka 'pi bhagavad-guṇa-śravaṇa-kīrtanāt

(37) [This verse lists some of the other ways by which ‘Bhajan’ can be done for attaining success in ‘Bhakti’. Independently also, the methods enumerated in this verse are all useful and effective means to attain success in ‘Bhakti’.]

Even if one has to live in the world (because it may not be possible for him to completely renounce it for various practical reasons) then also one can (a) listen to the great glories of the Lord God and his divine attributes, and (b) at the same time one can sing or recite about these glories and divine attributes of the Lord (in order to achieve success in Bhakti).

[Here, more methods are listed. It would be noted that the two methods advised here—viz. ‘listening’ and ‘reciting’ the glories of the Lord God and his divine

attributes—are an extension of the concept of doing ‘Bhajan’ as described in the previous verse no. 36.

Whereas verse no. 35 is more focused on doing meditation and contemplation on the Lord God at the subtle level of the mind, the present verse no. 36 says that if such a high degree of concentration of the mind is not possible for a spiritual aspirant amid the world he lives in then still he need not despair for there is another easier and practical method available for him. He can listen and speak about the glories and divinity of the Lord God even while remaining engaged in the affairs of his daily life. No need to shut himself up to do meditation and contemplation; if he listens to the glories of the Lord God and speaks about the Lord whenever he gets the time and opportunity then also his mind would slowly begin to think of the Lord in the long run. It is surely and certainly better than letting the mind enjoy listening to and talking about the world and its sense objects. The more the mind hears and talks about the Lord God and less about the world and its deluding charms, the more and more it would be diverted to the Lord in a very gradual and subtle way. This is because the sub-conscious level of the mind is directly affected by what the mind thinks at the conscious level of existence. It is this sub-conscious level of the mind that is the data bank of the creature, it is the library which stores all vital information that play a pivotal role in determining how the mind actually works during its conscious interaction with the world. If this store of information, i.e. the sub-conscious, stores positive thoughts such as those related to spiritualism and the Lord God, then the mind would have a positive bank of information to refer to and act upon its advice. By and by, the entire personality of the person undergoes a subtle change—from being a person immersed in the lowly affairs of the gross perishable world and fettered to it so much so that his soul is destined to be doomed, he rises to being an exalted and liberated person who is spiritually elevated and headed towards God-realisation with its attendant bliss and beatitude.

A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2, 4-7 that precede Doha no. 113 that say: “Those who have not heard the glories of Lord Ram, their ears are noting but dark holes where snakes live. Those who do not bow their heads before their Guru (spiritual teacher) and Lord Hari (Lord God), their heads are like a bitter guard. Those who do not establish Bhakti for the Lord in their hearts, their lives are worthless and no better than corpses. Those who do not sing the glories of Lord Ram, their tongues are like those of frogs (who croak meaninglessly). Those whose hearts do not exult upon hearing the stories of the Lord and his glories, such hearts stubborn and emotionless are like hard stone.”

Further it is said in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 119 that: “If a man utters the holy name of the Lord even under compulsion or when he is in a helpless state, then also the horrifying effects of sins committed by him over countless previous lives are made null and void (i.e. they are all neutralized). Similarly, those who remember the Lord God, they are able to cross this mundane existence as easily as one steps over a small, shallow depression made on the ground by a cow’s hoof.”

In Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇ, 11/26/29, the Lord says: “Those who listen to my divine glories, sing them and enjoy them heartily, verily, they show respect to me. Such people are deemed to be devoted to me; they acquire devotion for me.”

In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, Canto 10, verse no. 9, Lord Krishna says: “A devotee who has surrendered himself and his life to me, who has his mind fixed upon me, who speaks of me and enlightens others about me—such a devotee remains

contented; he takes delight in me and he abides in me (i.e. in remembering me and talking about me he finds the greatest of joy and contentedness).”

The underlying idea is that the devotee should feel the presence of his Lord God everywhere, at all moments of his existence, in everything he sees, does and speaks about.

In the context of what has been said in the present verse, refer to verse no. 80 which also reiterates this view.]

३८ मुख्यतस् तु महत्कृपयैव भगवत्कृपालेशाद् वा

38 mukhyatas tu mahat-kṛpayaiḥ bhagavat-kṛpā-leśād vā

(38) [So then, how is this eclectic spiritual state obtained? This verse answers this question.]

This is achieved by the grace and blessings of other realized souls, or by the divine grace and blessings of the Lord God himself.

[So it is necessary to get the blessings of one's seniors if one were to succeed in one's spiritual endeavours. It is equally important to seek the Lord's divine blessings as this blessing is revealed in the form of the blessings of great and pious souls. This is because these pious and self-realised souls have themselves become an embodiment of the Lord God; they are an image of the Lord and are in his likeness.

Even in a secular world it is observed that a student who finds favour with his teacher progresses well in his chosen field of study because the teacher takes special personal interest in his mentoring. The same thing applies in the spiritual field as well. If the devotee finds a good and helpful teacher then his spiritual journey becomes all the more easy and enjoyable as he has a friendly help to guide him along, to help him remove his doubts and hand-hold him if he falters or falls somewhere. This is what is meant here when it is said that “grace and blessings of realized souls as well as of the Lord God helps a devotee to attain success in Bhakti”.

A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 4 where it is said: “Dear son! On one end of the scale can be put all the pleasures and comforts of heaven and the bliss of self-realisation, but all of them will be outweighed by the moment of joy obtained on communion with saints.”

Again in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 46 it is said that: “It is true that Bhakti is a mine of all blessings and independent from all other spiritual virtues (i.e. it does not depend upon other virtues to become effective and glorified). However, it can be attained only by the communion of saints.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 130 it is said how the grace of the Lord can grant eternal peace and beatitude to even the most humble person when Tulsidas talks about himself as follows: “Oh Tulsidas! There is no Lord greater than Lord Ram, for even his tiny grace has granted eternal peace and beatitude to this stupid and dull-witted fellow known as Tulsidas who is good for nothing.”

We read in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 120 that: “Bhakti is like a self-illuminated gem that has revealed itself in

this world (for the spiritual welfare of all the living beings). But it can only be accessed by the grace of Lord Ram (i.e. by the blessings of the Lord God himself).”

Refer to the next two verses, nos. 39-40, in the context of what has been said in the present verse.]

३९ महत्सङ्गस् तु दुर्लभोऽगम्योऽमोघश् च

39 mahatsaṅgas tu durlabho'gamyo'moghaś ca

(39) To come in contact with great, pious and self-realised souls (saints) is indeed difficult. Even if one comes in such contact, it is difficult to know and comprehend them fully, though it is true that such communion with saints has an infallible effect.

[In this world it is very difficult to find persons who are truly and honestly pious and saintly, though of course one would easily find imposters and false-saints. Persons of a righteous nature, who live an exemplary life of virtuousness and selflessness, who are extremely pious and devoted to God, are a rare breed in a world full of deceit, pretensions and selfishness. They are like real diamonds that are priceless but rare to find.

Even if by some good fortune one comes across such holy men, it becomes very difficult to recognize them as they lead a very humble and unpretentious life. Genuine saints would not show-off themselves and never disclose their spiritual prowess, making it extremely difficult to know who they are because such true saints rarely exhibit external signs of saintliness, piety and self-realisation. On the other hand, imposters and con-men don holy garb, behave as if they are the most righteous persons on earth, talk of the scriptures and preach their philosophy, and have no compunctions in declaring themselves as God-men. Such false saints do not practice what they preach. But their expertise in show and pomp is so polished that a simple-hearted person easily falls prey to them, thinking them to be saintly persons though they are hypocrites and cheats.

But in case a person is fortunate enough to come in contact with true saints, then this contact has an infallible positive effect on him. The aura of divinity, holiness and spiritualism that radiates out from true saints is very infectious, and it directly influences the hidden spark of these qualities that are latent in every person—because the ‘true self’ of all living beings is their Atma, their soul which is pure consciousness, and not their gross external body. The strength spiritual energy radiating out from true saints is so powerful that it immediately influences a similar source of spiritual energy that is present in its neighbourhood inside the body of an ordinary person. Though these two sources of spiritual energy, viz. the one residing in the bosom of the saint and the other in the bosom of the ordinary person, are inherently the same and of equal strength, but the one inside the saint has been ignited and made splendid while that in the ordinary person is still dormant and surrounded by a thick veil of spiritual darkness. So when the two sources of spiritual energy come close to each other, their natural affinity helps the dormant one to spring forth and light up. On the other hand, closeness with crooks and pretenders only add more soot over the already dark veil that covers the spiritual spark that lies dormant in the person.

Another example will make the point clear as to how the communion with saints goes to ignite the latent spiritual spark in a person: Suppose a man is sleeping in a dark room with curtains drawn over the window. When he wakes up the next day when it is sunlight outside but the curtains remain drawn over the windows, he won't know that there is day. It is only when this curtain is drawn back by someone will he see the light of the day. Similarly, a man remains surrounded in a dark veil of spiritual ignorance till he meets saints who show him the light of Truth and help to ignite the spark of spiritualism in him by removing the dark veil of ignorance that had covered his inner-self till then.

As has been said in verse no. 38 herein above, this 'good fortune of coming into contact with saints is made possible by the grace of the Lord God'. So a wise seeker should pray to the Lord to give him this 'good fortune'. The Lord would help his devotee from falling prey to false saints because some imperceptible sixth sense would immediately alert him that the person whom he thinks to be a saintly soul is actually a pretender; so be wary of him.

Verily indeed and without gainsay, communion with true saints would produce a momentous result in the spiritual realm for the aspirant; this communion is extremely fruitful, potent and effective. A devotee of the Lord must understand that it is his dear Lord God who has made this possible for him so as to pave the way for his eternal happiness and freedom from worldly torments. So he would thank his Lord God for this grace and munificence of his. This fact is stressed in the next verse no. 40.]

४० लभ्यतेऽपि तत्कृपयैव

40 labhyate'pi tatkrpayaiva

(40) This good fortune (of contact and communion with true saints and pious souls) is possible only by the grace of the Lord God.

[Refer to verse no. 38 also in this context.

This truth is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7 where Vibhishan, the brother Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, tells Hanuman who was sent by Lord Ram to search for Sita: "Listen Hanuman! Now I am sure that Lord Ram has been very merciful upon me as it is not possible to meet a saint (of your exalted stature) without the Lord's grace."

This verse subtly implies that communion with saints and the spiritual rewards that accrue due to it, and the grace of the Lord God, are dependent upon each other. When a spiritual aspirant comes in contact with saints he realizes what 'grace of God' actually means in life; he can witness this grace manifesting itself in the life of such saints. He also then realizes how the Lord has been graceful upon him that he has had the good fortune to meet such saints, instead of fake ones.

The exceptional spiritual warmth and joy as well as the state of blissfulness in which saints live are unique to them. The reason is that such saints are self-realised and God-realised, which means that they have become a living embodiments of the Lord God himself. Now, the next verse endorses this truth.]

४१ तस्मिंस् तज्जने भेदाभावात्

41 tasmim̐s tajjane bhedābhāvāt

(41) It is because there is no distinction between the Lord God and his devotee.

[Here, the term ‘devotee’ applies to the true saint and a pious soul. The true saint is one who has become ‘self-realised’. To wit, he has become aware that his true self is not his physical gross body but his Atma which is pure consciousness known as the soul. This Atma of his is a fraction or an image of the Great Atma known as the Parmatma or the Lord God. This Parmatma is an embodiment of cosmic Consciousness that is characterized by being an eternal entity that is blissful, all-knowing, all-pervading, virtuous and righteous; it is as splendid as the sun where there is no trace of darkness symbolizing delusions and ignorance.

So therefore, the true saint himself becomes an embodiment of pure Consciousness, or in other words he becomes a personified form of the Lord God. That is why as soon as an aspirant comes in contact with a saint, a natural sense of affection and respect arises in his heart for the latter. And that is also why service rendered unto such saints is service rendered unto God himself.

It is said in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 218 in connection with Bharat’s devotion for Lord Ram: “Is there anyone as dear as Bharat is for Lord Ram, for the name of the Lord is always on the lips of Bharat, and at the same time the Lord always remembers Bharat.”

In Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇ, 9/4/68, the Lord himself says: “Pious and holy souls (saints) are like my heart (i.e. most dear to me), and I am the most beloved of those whose hearts are pious and righteous. Such souls do not recognize anything or anyone other than me, and I too do not know anyone except them. [To wit, we love each other dearly.]”

Srimad Bhagvat Geeta, Canto 9, verse no. 29, Lord Krishna says: “They who worship me with devotion, abide in me. And I too reveal myself in them.”

Such realized saints feel so spiritually enlightened and blessed that they become ecstatic and blissful even as they experience the revelation of the Lord God within themselves in the form of their ‘self’ known as the Atma which is nothing but pure Consciousness.

The obvious benefit of contact with saints is that they immediately make the spiritual aspirant see what God-realisation actually means. This single factor motivates him to pursue this path devotedly so that he too can enjoy its feeling of blessedness and beatitude.

In the context of this present verse no. 41, refer also to verse no. 70 of this book Narad Bhakti Sutra.]

४२ तद् एव साध्यतां तद् एव साध्यताम्

42 tad eva sādhyatām tad eva sādhyatām

(42) (Therefore—) One must strive to have that association (i.e. one must make all-out efforts to establish contact with self-realised, God-realised, pious and holy saints).

Indeed, one must endeavour to have this association alone (in order to succeed in one's spiritual efforts).

[The previous verse nos. 38 and 41 clearly stress the importance of establishing contact with truly self-realised and God-realised saints. This communion helps a spiritual aspirant in practical terms as these holy souls act as a guide for him, helping him in his spiritual efforts by showing him the correct path and removing all doubts and hurdles encountered on the way. The life and practices of these holy men act as a living example for the spiritual aspirant to follow, for he can witness spiritualism working in practice. They are his selfless friends and guides who would never lead him astray due to some vested self-interest.]

४३ दुःसङ्गं सर्वथैव त्याज्यः

43 duḥsaṅgaṁ sarvathaiva tyājyaḥ

(43) [Now in the following verses, sage Narad warns a spiritual aspirant about the various dangers and pitfalls that are to be avoided at all costs.]

One must be careful to avoid bad company at all costs; evil association is to be completely renounced (forthwith if possible, or as soon as practically possible).

[If good company is conducive to spiritual progress, then obviously bad company would have an opposite effect just like light and darkness can't co-exist. Bad or evil company is good for no one, but it is especially to be avoided by a traveler on the path of spiritualism.

While good company motivates a person to be good in life and aim for higher goals of life, bad company sucks him down in the vortex of sin, corruption and perversions of all denominations. Good company is uplifting, while evil company is degrading for the soul.

It is said in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 46, Lord Ram tells Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, that: "Brother Vibhishan! It is better to live in hell than in the company of evil people. Let the Creator not give anyone bad company to anyone (because it is the worst kind of curse and condemnation for a creature)."

Hence, the first step for a spiritual aspirant is to shun bad company. If this is not done then it is useless to seek good company because the negative effects of bad company will eclipse any benefit granted by good company.

Bad company takes our mind away from our spiritual goals; it corrupts our thoughts, deeds and words. Instead of freeing us from our spiritual miseries, bad company only ties us down more firmly to the endless cycle of grief and torments associated with life in this world.

Why should one avoid bad company? This question is answered now in the following verse.]

४४ कामक्रोधमोहस्मृतिभ्रंशबुद्धिनाशसर्वनाशकारणत्वात्

44 kāma-krodha-moha-smṛti-bhramśa-buddhi-nāśa-sarva-nāśa-kāraṇatvāt

(44) (Bad company is to be avoided as—) It is the cause of lust and passions, of anger, of infatuations and desires, of delusions of the mind and confusions of memory as well as corruption of the intellect and the loss of reasoning that lead to lack of discrimination—all of which, either individually or in different combinations, lead to a person's complete ruin.

[This verse points out that if a man keeps bad company he would be under a tremendous pressure of his peers to do what they do. It is practically seen around us that if a person joins a group of people who smoke then no matter how hard he tries he would one day start smoking himself. So therefore, if a man keeps bad company where his compatriots indulge in the world and its sense objects then he is bound to get this infection himself.

Remember: Indulgences of any kind are inimical to a person's spiritual welfare and should be avoided by the length of a long barge-pole; they should be completely abandoned. Their negative consequences and fatal influences may not be apparent immediately, but like a slow-acting poison they eat into the moral fiber of a person and make him hollow from the inside.

It ought to be noted here that the list of spiritually destructive factors given in this verse are also to be found in Lord Krishna's 'Srimad Bhagvat Geeta', Canto 2.

In Srimad Bhagvat Geeta, Canto 2, verse nos. 62-63 we read that: "A man who dwells on the sense objects in this world would naturally develop attachment for them; from this arises a longing or infatuation for them; and when these desires remain unfulfilled they create anger and recklessness of the mind; this leads to loss of discrimination and reasoning as the mind gets confused and deluded. Like a drunk man, this moral and spiritual downslide ends with complete ruin for the concerned person."

Lust, passion, anger, infatuation, desire, delusions, confusions, corruption and irrationality—all of these are grave diseases for the soul. They lead to blurring of the mind and confusion of the intellect so that the individual is unable to decide what is good for him and what is bad. It is like the case of a man who starts taking drugs because they give him immediate relief from the many existential problems he faces in life. But he becomes so addicted to these drugs that at a later stage when he discovers that they are playing havoc with his health he is unable to abandon them easily; he is trapped in a vicious cycle. Meanwhile, the drugs ruin his body and hasten his death.

Similarly, if a man is not careful in the beginning itself then the negative qualities mentioned herein above take hold of him and drag him down the precipice of ruin.

This verse describes beautifully the steps that lead to a person's ruin. First he has a desire and longs to have something in this world. Then he becomes passionate about it and gets infatuated with the thing desired. Unable to quench his thirst for having enough of it, he becomes angry. Anger leads to loss of mind and discrimination; he cannot decide what action is good for his future and what is ruinous. Like a rudderless ship, he becomes adrift, and frustration takes a firm hold on him, leading to further delusions and more confusions. Exhausted and hallucinating, he finally sinks into the bottomless pit from which ironically he had always wanted to

get out. Such a man fails to achieve the main goal of life—which is to attain freedom from the cycle of delusions and confusions that hinder attainment of liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death, to attain emancipation and salvation for the soul that leads to eternal peace, bliss, beatitude and felicity. The great philosopher and exponent of Advaitya Vedanta, Adi Shankaracharya, has called such ruin ‘sarva-naasha’—i.e. ‘complete ruin’.

Hence, a person who indulges in the world and its sense objects is moving away from his spiritual goal of life. Mere doing rituals and pretensions of having devotion for the Lord God and worshipping him would mean nothing, and it is only cheating one’s own self.]

४५ तरङ्गिता अपीमे सङ्गात् समुद्रायन्ति

45 taraṅgitā apīme saṅgāt samudrāyanti

(45) Though these negative things (such as lust, desire, anger etc.) appear to be mere ripples (i.e. small and inconsequential) in the beginning, yet they gradually build up (in evil company to) assume the form of huge waves of miseries and torments (that overwhelm a person).

[In the beginning a person thinks that he will be able to overcome lust and desire and anger when he wants so; that they are merely a passing phase in his life. But they are like small ripples on the surface of the ocean that coalesce with one another and are gradually whipped up by strong gusts of wind to form huge walls of waves that gather strength and may eventually overturn even sturdy ships.

A small infection that may seem ordinary and innocuous in the beginning may prove fatal if one does not take proper care of it. Similarly, a small and apparently harmless fire lit near a bunch of firewood may be fanned by strong winds to light up into a mighty fireball. Likewise, these evil things (worldly enjoyments, longing, anger, mental confusions etc., as well their root cause in the form of evil company) that look trifling in the beginning may slowly build up into a horrible storm that would uproot the tree and make it fall (i.e. they would lead to complete ruin of the person and undermine his spiritual welfare).

These negative qualities surround the person from all sides like an octopus encircling its prey, and then they gradually overwhelm him and suck out whatever goodness that may still persists inside him. The web of worldly delusions is called “Maya”. It is like this octopus with its tentacles. It is also like a whirlpool found in the ocean that sucks everything that falls in the vortex of its rapidly churning waters.

It is well nigh impossible to escape this “Maya”. The next verse no. 46 tells us how to successfully do it.]

४६ कस् तरति कस् तरति मायां यः सङ्गं त्यजति यो महानुभावं सेवते निर्ममो भवति

46 kas tarati kas tarati māyāṁ yaḥ saṅgaṁ tyajati yo mahānubhāvaṁ sevate nirmamo bhavati

(46) [Question:-] Who can cross this vast ocean of delusions known as ‘Maya’; who can ever cross it (because it is so difficult to do so)?

[Answer:-] He who renounces all attachments with the sense objects of the world, he who keeps company of wise saintly persons and serves them, and he who abandons all sense of possession and the attitude of my and mine (with respect to all the things in this world)—he alone is able to cross this vast ocean representing ‘Maya’.

[If one wishes to swim across an ordinary river he has to push the water behind him by using his hands and legs; then only will he move forward. By practice he can even swim against the current if tries strong enough. Otherwise he would be swept with the current downstream.

Similarly, if one wishes to overcome spiritual delusions and confusions then he must make diligent efforts towards this goal. What steps must he take? This verse guides him: He must first of all detach himself from the world of sense objects and their temptations. He must keep company of wise, realized, pious and saintly persons who would show him the way forward, remove his doubts, and who themselves act as a living example for him to emulate. Detachment from worldly objects would be fruitful only when the aspirant stops thinking that such and such thing belongs to him, that it is his. This is obvious: as long as he continues to think that a particular thing belongs to him, that it is his, the sense of renunciation is not there at all. Further, possession causes worry and anxiety as the person is concerned about the safety of his possessions. He would wish to not only secure it but also to enhance its value by more additions. This leads to desires and infatuation. Failure to fulfill these desires lead to anger and frustration.

The chain of delusions called Maya is so vicious and powerful that it may be easy to escape a whirlpool but well neigh impossible to break free from the grip of Maya. But still there is hope for a sincere spiritual aspirant—he can break free from the tentacles of this octopus-like Maya and swim safely across the symbolic ocean with its vicious whirlpools of delusions and confusions by following the guideline laid down in this verse.

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 15, there is an aphorism on Maya, and it says: “The feeling of ‘Me’ and ‘Mine’, or ‘I’ and ‘My’, as well as ‘You’ and ‘Yours’ is called Maya”. It is this concept of ‘me and mine’, of ‘I and my’, and of ‘you and yours’ that is the cause of all attachment and ill-will in this world. A man who has freed himself from this illusion is really a spiritually free man.

Though one has to use his own limbs and make effort to swim across the river, yet he would need help from expert swimmers to learn the skills to successfully do so, and in cases of emergency to ask them to hold his hand to prevent him from sinking. Likewise, though it is true that a spiritual aspirant has to make efforts himself to overcome the negative effects of Maya, but company of wise and learned saints would surely help him to succeed in his efforts by giving him good advice and correct guidance, and when needed even hand-holding him so that he does not slip and fall down. These saints act as a sturdy barge or boat, and their company is equivalent to a layman who knows nothing about swimming being easily able to cross a river aboard it.

Lord Krishna has cited this example in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇ, 11/26/32, when he says: “Even as a strong bark of a tree that floats on the surface (of the water in a river or ocean) is a resort for those who are on the verge of drowning, persons

who are pious, saintly, wise, enlightened and self-realised, who have attained perfection of the soul and peace of mind, are like a buoy for those who are finding themselves sucked in the vast ocean of mundane existence.”

Again, in *Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇa*, 11/26/31, the Lord says: “For a person who suffers from cold and the fear of darkness and ghosts, nearness to a fire is of great comfort. Similarly, for a person suffering from the fear of mundane existence and the endless cycle of birth and death, the company of pious and holy saints helps him to remove his doubts and delusions, and grants him peace of mind.”

The greatest impediment in one’s spiritual progress is to be attached to any material thing of the senses in this world, to have a sense of possession of something. This diverts the mind from its true goal as it keeps it busy with the thing possessed. One begins to be attached with his possessions, worrying about it and always thinking how to safeguard it and enhance its value and size. First there is the craze of possessing something, then comes the sense of belonging—that it belongs to ‘me’, as well as the sense of possession—that it is ‘mine’; I own it. This is called “*Mamtaa*”—i.e. attachment, infatuation and longing. If one has *Mamtaa* in him, one cannot be completely free at the emotional level to pursue his spiritual goal; there cannot be true renunciation in the presence of counter elements such as attachments, longings and infatuations. All efforts to swim across a mighty river would fail if one has a heavy weight tied around his neck, for sooner rather than later he would be so exhausted that he would give up and prefer to die.

To wit, this verse advises a spiritual aspirant to give up the sense of attachment as well as possessiveness.

There is a marvelous verse no. 8 of ‘*Nitishatakam*’ of the great king-turned-ascetic known as *Bhartrihari* which stresses on the importance of having good company of saints. It says: “When I got a little knowledge, I thought I know everything; I was blinded like a wild elephant run amok. When I came in contact with wise persons I realized how foolish I was.”]

४७ यो विविक्तस्थानं सेवते यो लोकबन्धम् उन्मूलयति निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवति यो योगक्षेमं त्यजति

47 yo vivikta-sthānaṁ sevate yo lokabandham unmūlayati nistraiguṇyo bhavati yo yoga-kṣemaṁ tyajati

(47) [Sage Narad further elaborates as to how one can overcome the influences of Maya.]

He who retires to a solitary place and renounces all his attachments and relationships with the material world and its sense objects (i.e. he who finds joy in living away from the humdrum affairs of mundane life and the material world full of temptations), he who becomes free from the influences of the three Gunas (i.e. he who has become neutral and calm by overcoming the influences of emotional reactions; he who remains unruffled under all circumstances and provocations), he who has no desire to acquire anything to sustain himself, and then get over-worked about the safety of his acquisitions—verily, such a person can be said to have overcome Maya.

[This verse is an extension of verse no. 46 where it has already been said that renunciation is the key to overcome Maya.

Living in a solitary place does not mean going to the forest or entering a cave. Say, what is the use of retiring to a forest or a cave if the mind is still hitched to the material world and its deluding sense of pleasure and comfort. The main idea is that a seeker of spiritual peace and bliss should live in a place that is free from evil influences. And the best place is one's own heart, for if there is no peace internally then no matter where one goes he will never find peace at all. It is the inner-self that has to be a secluded place because it is what actually matters, and not so much the external world in which a person has to live due to compulsions of birth and circumstances. If a man has sufficiently strong will power and is wise and enlightened enough, then he can easily manage to neglect the outside world while being at peace with himself internally. This is the subtle meaning of this verse.

To wit, it means one has to remain totally detached from the external world, and be at peace with one's own self internally. This will come automatically if one practices renunciation in the true sense—because he won't feel bothered by what is happening around him; he would be able to maintain his internal calm even while living amidst the hustle and bustle of life. Though it seems quite difficult to do so in the beginning, but a little practice would make it happen. One can say that it is like living in a perpetual state of meditation. This eclectic state of mind helps a spiritual aspirant focus on the greater goals of life instead of remaining perpetually trapped in the turmoil of mundane existence. A solitary life gives an aspirant time to reflect and introspect. The greatest benefit of this way of life is that the spiritual aspirant gets an opportunity to come face to face with his own 'self', which is his Atma that is pure consciousness. There is no disturbance from the outside world.

The spiritual aspirant soon realizes how much peace and bliss is there in this way of life of renunciation and seclusion. He also realizes that the actual needs of life are extremely few, and it is a waste of time and energy in acquiring countless things that are of no real use to him. The very basic needs of life are few and available in abundance, and the true devotee must have faith in his Lord God that he would take care of them. Once this conviction takes a firm root in the mind and heart of the aspirant, there would be no need for him to pursue this world.

Such a man would not get entangled in the world and its delusions.

There are three Gunas that are referred to in this verse: these are Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna. The 'Guna' is the inherent quality or virtue in all living beings. The 'Sata Guna' is the best quality, the 'Tama Guna' is the worst, and the 'Raja Guna' is in between them. A combination of these three Gunas decides the personality of a person and how he would behave or react in a given situation. To become neutral it is important to rise above the influences of these three Gunas.

The Lord has assured his devotees that if they renounce their attachment with and dependence on this world, if they think only of the Lord and worship him selflessly, then the Lord would take personal care of all their needs—refer: *Srimad Bhagvad Geeta*, Canto 9, verse no. 22.]

४८ यः कर्मफलं कर्माणि सन्यस्यति ततो निर्द्वन्द्वो भवति

48 yaḥ karma-phalaṁ karmāṇi sanyasyati tato nirdvandvo bhavati

(48) [To attain abiding internal peace, happiness and calmness—] One has to abandon all the fruits of one's actions (i.e. one should do deeds selflessly and without expecting anything in return). Not only this, it is still better not to get involved in ego-centric deeds at all. This principle helps a spiritual aspirant to be free from the turmoil created by the pair of opposites and their attendant torments and perplexities. Such a (wise and enlightened) person surely overcomes Maya.

[If one is not worried about the result of his deeds, if one does his deeds as a matter of his duty and service to the Lord God, then sure enough he will have no anxiety or worry in his mind. The opposites of success and failure, of gain and loss, of pleasure and pain, of joy and sorrow, of having fame and good name or ignominy and bad name—nothing would upset his inner sense of tranquility. Hence, he would be uninfluenced either by adversities or by favourable circumstances; he would be able to maintain his calm and poise. He would not be deluded and perturbed; he would have no enemy or friend; all things and all circumstances would be equal for him. Nothing would be possessed by him as he has not done anything to acquire it, nor would he lose anything as nothing belongs to him in the first place. To wit, he will be beyond the grasp of 'Maya'; he would have transcended Maya and its ubiquitous influence.

In Srimad Bhagvat Geeta, Canto 2, verse nos. 45-46, Lord Krishna tells Arjun: "Oh Arjun! The Vedas (scriptures) describe the evolution of this world as a manifestation of the varied forms of the three primary Gunas (Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna). So you must rise above enjoyment of these deluding forms as they are illusive and not the real enjoyment for the soul. Rise above the pairs of opposites that are associated with this delusory world—such as for instance, the pair of pain and pleasure, as they are destabilising for your internal peace. Instead, establish yourself in a state that is eternal and stable—i.e. in the state that is identified with pure consciousness, as this state is equivalent to God-hood. You should be absolutely immune to the sense of worldly possessions, the desire for them as well as from the worry to preserve them. Practice self-control. The purpose of the Vedas is served for a person who understands their purport."

This world is driven by actions. No one can sit idle, and it is not advisable to do so either. The trick is that one should do deeds selflessly, without any sense of attachment to them and their results, and as a duty and service to the Lord God. In this context, refer to the previous verse nos. 8 and 19 of 'Narad Bhakti Sutra'.

We can take the example of a fruit-bearing tree. This tree gives us sweet fruits, shade and shelter, but expects nothing in return. But everyone praises such a tree.]

४९ यो वेदान् अपि सन्यस्यति केवलम् अविच्छिन्नानुरागं लभते

49 yo vedān api sanyasyati kevalam avicchinnānurāgaṁ labhate

(49) [In this verse it is emphasized that the scriptures are meant only as a means to show the correct path; they are guides and teachers. They are a medium to attain one's goal; they are not a goal in themselves. So, mere scholarship in their text, without actually implementing them in practice and benefiting from their teaching, is a futile exercise.]

Nay, one should even abandon the Vedas, and instead inculcate undiluted and uninterrupted love and affection (for Lord God) (to gain or achieve one's spiritual objective).

[The main objective for a devotee—and the main theme of this book 'Narad Bhakti Sutra'—is to attain oneness with his beloved Lord God by the path of devotion and love. The Vedas show him the way to achieve this goal. So once this knowledge is gained and all doubts removed, the Vedas become redundant. True form of renunciation includes renunciation of a sense of scholarship of the Vedas as well. This is not at all meant to insult the scriptures or undermine their importance and holiness, but it is merely to stress that one should be focused on his main objective rather than be distracted by the countless things he encounters on the path towards this goal, though of course one should be thankful to the Vedas for showing him the correct and the true path and goal of life.

The same idea is expressed in one of the Upanishads called 'Amritbindu Upanishad'. In its verse no. 18 it is said that: "A wise person should abandon or discard the Vedas (i.e. their texts) after studying them thoroughly and understanding their teaching. It is just like the case of a person who discards the husk after removing the rice grains from it."

It ought to be noted that in the previous verse no. 12 it has been advised that one should follow the scriptures, such as the Vedas. When read with the present verse no. 49 it would be clear that the idea is to first study the scriptures, gain their knowledge, and then move on from there.

There is a verse in 'Vivekchudamani', verse no. 59, which says: "If one studies the scriptures but fail to realize the Truth revealed in them, then you have not read them; your effort has been wasted. On the other hand, if one has realized the Supreme Truth, then the scriptures would have fulfilled their purpose, and therefore they become redundant."

To wit, the Vedas, or for that matter any text, are like a vehicle that one takes to reach one's chosen destination. Once that destination is reached, one steps out of the vehicle and leaves it behind. So therefore, one should study the scriptures, gain knowledge from them, and then move on.]

५० स तरति स तरति लोकांस् तारयति

50 sa tarati sa tarati lokāṁs tārayati

(50) Verily indeed, such a person (who practices the principles laid down in the previous verses herein above) surely crosses over; he definitely crosses over (the influences of Maya as well as the cycle of transmigration with its attendant miseries and torments). He not only crosses himself, but also helps others to cross over alongside him. [To wit, such a person has delivered his own self from the vast ocean-like world of Maya, and at the same time those who follow him, his teaching and example, are also delivered from it.]

[The question 'who overcomes Maya' raised in verse no. 46, has been answered till this verse no. 50.

Earlier it has been said that the company of saints helps a spiritual aspirant to reach his goal as they act as a guide and example for him. This verse no. 50 reiterates this principle when it says that such persons who have inculcated spiritual qualities in themselves not only cross over this world of Maya personally but they help others who are associated with them to cross over too. Refer verse nos. 39, 41-42.

In verse no. 49 it is said that the ultimate goal of the study of the scriptures is to have love for the Lord God as this is the easiest and the best way to have eternal sense of happiness, bliss and peace. Now in the following verses, more is explained on the form that the 'love for the Lord God' takes.]

५१ अनिर्वचनीयं प्रेमस्वरूपम्

51 anirvacanīyaṁ premasvarūpam

(51) The nature of supreme form of love for Lord God is indescribable.

[Love cannot be described in words; it is beyond the inherent limitations that any form of language has. In fact, Lord God is a personified form of undiluted and purest form of love. Just as it is not possible to describe the Lord God in words, so it is also impossible to describe what love consists of. To wit, to love God is to identify one's self with him.

Love that can be expressed in words is superficial and a worldly form of love, such as that which is expressed between two human lovers. Love for the Lord God has no expression. It is a matter of experience; something that is felt and enjoyed without expression. It has a purely sublime form of existence, and it goes beyond the mundane and the gross forms of emotions or sentiments.

This verse means that the purest form of love and affection is that which exists between a devotee and his Lord God, and it is so divine, subtle and sublime that it cannot be expressed in words. At best it can be said that it is only experienced by the devotee himself.

In Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 15, Lord Ram has given a hint of this sort of love when he talks about his love for his divine consort Sita. He says: "Dear, the cord of love that binds you and me is known only to my soul, and my soul abides with you. Understand what my love for you is through this aphorism." Hence, the love that exists between a devotee and his Lord God is known to them alone, and no third party can have any idea of an iota of it.

Remember: The heart has no tongue, and the tongue has no heart. The heart can't speak what it feels or experiences, while the tongue can't feel love like the way it feels the taste food. This is reiterated in the next verse no. 52 herein below.

In the context of this verse that deals with the true form of 'love for Lord God', refer also to previous verse nos. 19-25 and 33.]

५२ मूकास्वादनवत्

52 mūkāsvādanavat

(52) Therefore, an attempt to describe what ‘true love’ is, is similar to asking a dumb man to describe the taste of food he has eaten.

[Just like a dumb man can’t describe the taste of food he has relished so much, the purest form of love and affection can’t be described in words. The truest and the purest kind of love is spontaneous, all-pervasive, fathomless, sublime, ethereal, eternal, selfless and indescribable by nature. We shall read more about it in verse no. 54 herein below.

A similar idea is expressed in the Taittiriya Upanishad, 2/9/1. This is the 2nd Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. It says: “The faculty of speech returns empty as it is unable to describe the Supreme Reality and Truth after a self-realised person has witnessed it.”

Verily indeed, true love is when the lover and the beloved become one and inseparable from each other. To wit, true love means that the devotee and the Lord God become one and inseparable.]

५३ प्रकाश्यते क्वापि पात्रे

53 prakāśyate kvāpi pātre

(53) However, this sublime and purest form of love does manifest itself occasionally in some rare person who is well-qualified for it.

[This exalted person will be self-realised and enlightened; indeed he would be God-realised. He would abide in a subtle world of pure consciousness, a world that is sublime and subtle, and is vastly different from this gross mundane world of material objects. He experiences bliss and beatitude that are inherent to the Atma, the pure conscious soul, which is his true identity. This Atma of his is an image of the supreme cosmic Atma known as the Parmatma. This ‘Parmatma’ is another name of the Lord God.

So in essence this verse refers to a fortunate person who has realized his inseparable identity with the Lord God whom he loves so much. This realization fills him with an eternal and abounding sense of joy, happiness, bliss, beatitude and felicity that radiates out of him like the light from a glow-worm. He is surrounded by a halo of divinity and holiness because he has become one with the Supreme Lord God himself. All human beings do not reach this eclectic state of spiritual awakening when an individual can experience oneness with the Supreme Being.

Refer to verse no. 67 in the context of this present verse no. 53.

In the next verse no. 54 we will read about the attributes of this purest kind of love for Lord God.]

५४ गुणरहितं कामनारहितं प्रतिक्षणवर्धमानम् अविच्छिन्नं सूक्ष्मतरम् अनुभवरूपम्

54 guṇarahitaṁ kāmanārahitaṁ pratikṣaṇavardhamānam avicchinnam sūkṣmataram anubhavarūpam

(54) [This verse enumerates the special qualities of true love.]

(i) True form of love has no specific attributes as it is indescribable and transcendental by its inherent nature. (ii) It has no desires or expectations (as it is selfless). (iii) It increases every moment (and nothing can diminish its intensity which grows by the passage of time). (iv) It is everlasting and abiding (and does not fade away over time). (v) It is extremely sublime, subtle and ethereal in nature. (vi) And it is a matter of (spontaneous) experience (and not something that can be described and limited in words).

[We read here that there are six special virtues of true and pure form of love.

The first virtue is that true love is absolutely pure, and therefore it is untainted by any of the three Gunas that determine the basic nature of this mortal world. These three Gunas are Sata Guna (the best of the three qualities), Tama Guna (the worst of the three qualities) and Raja Guna (that lies somewhere between the two extremes). The entire world is driven by the effects of these three Gunas, in their different combinations and permutations, on the nature and character of all living beings. True love is transcendental by nature, and hence it goes beyond the purview of these three Gunas as well. In the context of love for the Lord God it is clear that when a devotee reaches a certain level of realization he would understand that there exists no difference between him and the Lord. Since the Lord is beyond any attributes, anything related to him is also beyond attributes. Hence, love for the Lord God is also beyond attributes.

The second virtue is that true love does not expect any reward; the true lover does not expect anything from his or her beloved. It is completely and absolutely selfless. This applies to both the lover as well as the beloved. Remember: Just as it takes to hands to clap, love also is a two-way highway that needs reciprocity to attain supreme bliss and happiness. But this reciprocity does not mean expectations, for it should be spontaneous. To wit, the love between the devotee and the Lord God is mutual and spontaneous; it is selfless and dedicated.

The third virtue is that true love goes on increasing by time. The devotee loves his Lord God selflessly, and not to fulfill any of his wants, whether such wants pertain to this mundane world or to the spiritual world. The devotee does not love his Lord God for any quality or virtue that the Lord possesses. He simply loves the Lord for the sake of love. As he comes closer to the Lord, his love and affection grows in depth and strength. It becomes more intense with the passage of time. This love for the Lord God is not adversely affected by any adverse situation or any negative thing that the devotee is told about the Lord by his detractors. He takes such negative things as a test of the trueness of his love for the Lord. It is not like the case when a person begins to love someone as he feels that he has to gain from his association with the other person; this kind of love is not sustainable because as soon as his expectations are not met or when they are fulfilled, in either case the love begins to wane.

The fourth virtue of love is that it is everlasting. This fits in well with the third and the second virtues. Since true love is pure and selfless, since it is spontaneous and transcendental in nature, since there is no expectation in this love and it is not dependent upon fulfillment of some vested interests, it not only grows stronger and deeper with the passage of time but also overcomes all adversities and hurdles. So it assumes an everlasting nature. To wit, once the devotee begins to love his Lord God, nothing can stop him. It becomes an abiding relationship that is directly related to his heart. This is an irreversible process.

The fifth virtue of true love is that it is extremely sublime, subtle and ethereal by its very nature. Remember: This is not a worldly love-affair between two individuals who are attracted towards each other due to physical reasons; it is not lust and passion. This love is for the Lord God who is purity and truth personified. There is no conceit and pretensions with the Lord. The Lord is the Master of this world who does not condone negativity and ill-character. Therefore, the love for the Lord is bound to be of the purest and the truest kind, love that relates directly to the heart where the Atma or the soul resides. This Atma is pure consciousness and a personified form of the supreme Consciousness represented by the Lord God. A love that relates to the Atma and the Parmatma (i.e. the love between the devotee and his Lord God respectively) is as sublime, subtle and ethereal in its nature as the Atma and the Parmatma are.

And finally, the sixth virtue of true love is that it is a matter of spontaneous experience, and not something that can be described and limited in words. This virtue sums up all the previous virtues. One cannot see the Atma which is pure consciousness, but one can definitely experience the bliss that comes with the realization or awareness of this Atma. Further, as has been said earlier in the fifth virtue, the love for the Lord God is sublime, subtle and ethereal by nature, and therefore it is only an experience that cannot be expressed in words. This fact is clearly mentioned in verse no. 52 which cites the example of a dumb man to illustrate this point. A devotee is so overwhelmed by the experience of bliss, beatitude and felicity once he realizes the Lord that even if he had tried to explain his feelings he would have failed. It is like the case of a bee drinking nectar from a flower; this bee is oblivious to everything else. Even if it gets burnt, it would not be aware of it. A man scorched by the desert heat and on the verge of death cannot explain the joy he finds upon discovering cool water of an oasis even if he wishes to do so, as he is simply numbed by this life-giving experience. So is the case with true love for the Lord God—the feeling of ecstasy and elation is so overwhelming that the devotee can experience it himself but cannot share it with other by the means of words.]

५५ तत् प्राप्य तद् एवावलोकयति तद् एव शृणोति तद् एव भाषयति तद् एव चिन्तयति

55 tat prāpya tad evāvalokayati tad eva śṛṇoti tad eva bhāṣayati tad eva cintayati

(55) When the devotee realizes (attains; acquires) that supreme form of love for Lord God, he sees nothing else, he hears nothing else, he speaks of nothing else, and he thinks of nothing else.

[Refer also to verse nos. 17, 66-67 and 80also in this context.

Simply put, the present verse no. 55 means that the experience of ecstasy and bliss that comes with having love for Lord God is so overwhelming that the devotee is numbed and made speechless. It is like the case of a bee drinking nectar from a flower; this bee is oblivious to everything else. Even if it gets burnt, it would not be aware of it.

When the devotee has attained the supreme form of love for the Lord God, his individuality and emotions cease to exist just like the case of a river after it has fallen into the ocean.

It is also like the case of a thirsty man accessing an oasis having a source of cool, sweet and refreshing water in a dry and hot desert. When this person enjoys the bliss that comes when he quenches his burning thirst, he would not be concerned with anything else. Playing music to his ears, or offering the most delectable dishes to tempt his tongue, or a waft of cool breeze to caress his skin—nothing works for him as much as the bliss derived from as simple an exercise as drinking plain water.

In the truest form of love that the devotee has for his beloved Lord God, all the sense organs of perception are involved. He ‘sees’ nothing but his Lord everywhere—implying that the organ of sight, the eye, is involved. He ‘hears’ nothing but the Lord all around him—implying that the organ of hearing, the ear, is involved. He ‘speaks’ of nothing but the Lord—implying that the organ of speech, the tongue, is involved. And he ‘thinks’ of nothing but the Lord—implying that the mind itself is also deeply involved. To wit, this ‘love for Lord God’ becomes a sort of meditation for a devotee, and hence the bliss derived from this love is alike the bliss derived by an ascetic upon self-realisation when he has reached the climax of meditation called the ‘Turiya State’. This is the state of transcendental existence when the ascetic experiences the presence of pure consciousness. The devotee too experiences the same consciousness when he evolves in his love for the Lord God because the Lord is a personified form of supreme cosmic Consciousness.

To wit, the feeling ecstasy, bliss, beatitude and felicity felt when devotee develops true love for his Lord God, a love that is nectar-like, is as intense as the divine experience obtained by an ascetic when he becomes self-realised, i.e. when he experiences the presence of the pure consciousness in his inner-self. Immersed in this supreme experience of bliss and joy, the devotee would naturally not want to talk about, see or hear anything else.

This eclectic spiritual idea is succinctly expressed in the Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda, in Canto 7, section 24, verse no. 1, when it says that: “Where one does not see anyone else, does not listen to anyone else, does not know anyone else—verily, that state of existence is ‘infinite’ (i.e. it is synonymous with Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness which is infinite). On the other hand, when one sees another, hears another, knows another—then it is a finite existence (that corresponds to this mortal world). Verily, that which is ‘infinite’ is eternal and constant, while that which is ‘finite’ is mortal and transient.”

Hence, worldly love is a finite form of love because it relates to the world that is itself finite and perishable. On the other hand, love for Lord God is infinite because the Lord himself is infinite and eternal.

Just like in the case of meditation where the concept of time and distance vanish, so is also the case of true love where the concept of the past and the future has no relevance for the lover. The lover and the beloved live in the present, and this present is perpetual for them as they are always lost in each other’s thoughts. To wit, there is no distance between the devotee and the Lord God, and for all practical purposes they become one—refer verse no. 41.

Up till this point, sage Narad has laid out the salient features of the supreme form of love. Now he goes on to tell us what constitutes the secondary or a lower form of love.]

७६ गौणी त्रिधा गुणभेदाद् आर्तादिभेदाद् वा

56 gaunī tridhā guṇa-bhedād ārtādibhedād vā

(56) [As opposed to the supreme form of love that is independent of the effects of the three Gunas, there is a lower or a secondary form of love that is affected by the three Gunas.]

There is a secondary form of love, and it is of three kinds depending upon the mental disposition and attitude of the individual devotee, which in turn depend upon the influences of the three fundamental Gunas on the devotee.

[Earlier we have read in verse nos. 47 and 54 that true form of love for the Lord God is one that is not affected or influenced by the three Gunas. These three Gunas or fundamental qualities in the world are known as (i) Sata Guna, (ii) Raja Guna, and (iii) Tama Guna. The Sata Guna is the best quality that relates to the divine virtues of the Atma. The Tama Guna is the grossest quality that relates to mundane world of sense objects. The Raja Guna lies somewhere in between, and it acts as a balancing factor. The dominance of the Sata Guna in a man would make him pious and holy; the Tama Guna would make him evil and corrupt; and the Raja Guna would determine which way he goes. A combination of all these three Gunas and the different ratios in which they are present in any individual would determine the nature, character and personality of a person.

A highly wise, enlightened and self-realised person rises above the influence of these three Gunas, but an ordinary person is subjected to their influences. The ‘secondary form of love’ that is being referred to in this verse is that which is influenced by the effects of these three Gunas working together in varying permutations and combinations in different individuals. Since this secondary love is tainted by the Gunas, it loses its primary pristine form of purity, sublimity, holiness and truthfulness; it becomes a tainted or conditioned or twisted form of love.

The three Gunas acting in different ratios determine the nature and character of a person. If the Sata Guna is dominant, the person will be inclined to be noble and righteous. If the Tama Guna is dominant, he would be evil and pervert and tempted towards the material enjoyment of the world. The Raja Guna would determine a person’s actions and deeds depending upon the ratio of these two Gunas present in him. Love that is generated in the heart of a person in this corrupted environment is not free to determine its own course; it will be swayed one or the other way. It’s like the case of the flame of a candle left in the open wind—at best it feels fortunate that it is able to keep itself alight, but it is never steady and keeps on flickering and swaying from side to side every moment of its uncertain existence. On the other hand, true love is like the flame of a candle protected by a glass chimney; the flame is erect and steady.

The secondary form of love for the Lord God comes under three categories as follows:

(i) Satwic Devotion or Love for Lord God: This devotion is the result of the dominance of Sata Guna in a person. Here, the devotee loves his Lord God with the aim of getting the Lord’s blessing to destroy his sins as well as having protection of the Lord from their horrible consequences. He offers his actions to the Lord as a means of service, and worships the Lord as a religious and moral duty. Refer: *Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran*, 3/29/10.

(ii) Rajsic Devotion or Love for Lord God: This devotion is the result of the dominance of Raja Guna in a person. Here, the devotee undertakes worship so that the Lord blesses him with worldly gains and enjoyments. He loves the Lord because the Lord would fulfill his desires easily. The devotee is mindful of his duties and even

takes care of doing them properly and righteously, but the aim is to gain worldly possessions and gains. This obviously is not true form of spiritual devotion for Lord God. Refer: Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 3/29/9.

(iii) Tamsic Devotion or Love for Lord God: In this form of devotion, the devotee offers his worship to the Lord God so that he can settle scores with his enemies, or to get the Lord's blessings to uphold his hypocrisy and ego. This is the worst kind of devotion. Refer: Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 3/29/8.

In all these three forms of devotion for the Lord God, there is a desire to have something in return for offering of worship. The worshipper has a sense of expectation from the Lord, and hence none of them is true devotion or true love for Lord God. As long as the devotee feels that the Lord is answering his prayers and fulfilling his wishes, he would continue to offer worship to the Lord, but if he finds that some other deity is more easily appeased then he would switch loyalties and worship some other God.

Further, in these forms of worship there is a sense of distinction between the devotee who offers worship, and the Lord who accepts this worship. It is easily distinguished from true love where this distinction vanishes.

One point is to be noted in this connection. Even though this secondary form of worship or devotion is not the ideal way to have love for the Lord God, but it is still better than not doing anything at all. It is just like the case of one imbibing some kind of goodness while being in the company of saints even if he is merely doing routine chores for them and is least bothered in improving himself or learning something from these saints. To wit, worshipping the Lord in any manner whatsoever is bound to have some positive effects on the devotee. To start with for instance, he would at least spare some time in thinking of the Lord; he would be conscious of not doing anything that is so unrighteous that it offends the Lord. Although this is not the direct route to God-realisation, but at least it is a round-about path to the same goal!

Out of the three ways of worshipping the Lord mentioned herein above, the 'Satwic devotion' is by far the best. We shall read about it in the next verse no. 57.]

५७ उत्तरस्माद् उत्तरस्मात् पूर्वपूर्वो श्रेयाय भवति

57 uttarasmād uttarasmāt pūrva-pūrvo śreyāya bhavati

(57) The three types of Bhakti (devotion) mentioned herein above (in the previous verse no. 56) are beneficial for the devotee in the reverse order.

[To wit, out of the three form of devotion mentioned in verse no. 56, the best form is the one that is called 'Satwic Bhakti', which is followed by 'Rajasic Bhakti', and lastly the 'Tamsic Bhakti'.

If we extend this verse to include the purest form of Bhakti or devotion for Lord God that has been elaborately described earlier from verse no. 1 to verse no. 55, then it is deemed to be the best form of Bhakti for Lord God, one that supersedes the three forms mentioned in verse no. 56.]

५८ अन्यस्मात् सौलभ्यं भक्तौ

58 anyasmāt saulabhyaṁ bhaktau

(58) [Lauding the path of Bhakti, sage Narad says—] Bhakti (devotion) for Lord God is the easiest and the best of all means to attain the Lord (or become God-realised).

[Refer to verse no. 33 and 81 also in the context of the present verse.

The scriptures have described many and varied paths by which one can attain spiritual bliss and beatitude as well as liberation and deliverance for his soul. Some of these paths are ‘Yoga’, the path of meditation, ‘Dhyan’, the path of contemplation, ‘Japa’ or repetition of the Lord’s holy name, ‘Yagya’, the path of doing sacrifices, ‘Karma’, the path of doing righteous deeds, ‘Dharma’, the path of righteous and auspicious living, ‘Gyan’, the path of knowledge, and so on. In this context, refer to verse no. 25.

This fact is explicitly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 46 where Lord Ram has declared: “Say, which path is so easy as compared to the path of Bhakti which requires no effort as is the need for doing Yoga (meditation), Yagya (sacrifices), Japa (repetition of holy Mantras), Tapa (austerities and penances), Upwaas (fasting) etc.”

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 45 where Lord Ram says: “If one wants to experience the joy and beatitude of heavenly existence right here in this world, then Bhakti is the easiest way for him to achieve this goal. There are other ways too, such as the path of Gyan (knowledge), but all of them are cumbersome and besotted with difficulties. Even if someone succeeds in them, he is still not as dear to me as he who follows the path of Bhakti. Remember: Bhakti is an independent path that leads one to freedom from all troubles.”

Bhakti invariably leads to immediate bliss and peace. This is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 46 where Lord Ram says: “The ecstatic sense of bliss and beatitude that accompanies Bhakti when it reaches its climax is experienced by those who have achieved this eclectic state of spiritual attainment.”

A similar idea is expressed in Srimad Bhagvat Geeta, Canto 5, verse no. 29 where Lord Krishna says: “I am a selfless friend of all living beings. Anyone who comes to know me this way gets immediately rewarded by way of attaining peace.”

In Srimad Bhagvat Geeta, Canto 8, verse no. 14, Krishna tells Arjun: “Oh Arjun! He who remembers me always without fail, I am easily attained by him. This is why ascetics endeavour to remember or meditate upon me always.”

In Srimad Bhagvat Geeta, Canto 18, verse no. 66, Krishna assures: “Don’t worry. I will free you from all sins and their consequences. I will give you emancipation and salvation, and ensure eternal bliss and beatitude for your soul.”

A similar idea is expressed in many places in Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas. We can cite just one instance here, for example. In its Uttar Kand, Doha no. 87, Lord Ram tells the crow Kaagbhusund that: “Any living being who has devotion for me, and who serves me selflessly and without deceit and pretension, is most dear to me. Indeed and without gainsay, I declare that my devotee is very dear to me, like my own self.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 86, Lord Ram says: “If the creator Brahma has no devotion for me in his heart, then I would treat him like I treat all other living beings who are all dear to me. Yet, if

a living being has devotion for me then I have a special soft corner in my heart for him though he may be very lowly.”]

५९ प्रमाणान्तरस्यानपेक्षत्वात् स्वयं प्रमाणत्वात्

59 pramāṇāntarasyānapekṣatvāt svayaṁ pramāṇatvāt

(59) Bhakti (devotion for Lord God that incorporates the virtue of love and affection) is complete in itself. It does not depend upon any other thing to prove its effectiveness or usefulness. It is a proof in itself; it is independent and self-evident. It is a testimonial in itself; it does not require any endorsements.

[All other spiritual methods have different milestones that indicate the level of success that a practitioner has achieved while pursuing that particular path. But Bhakti that incorporates such virtues as devotion and love for Lord God is so comprehensive and self-evident that its results become immediately apparent. It is because the devotee begins to feel a sense of contentment and freedom from worries as soon as he develops Bhakti for Lord God as he is now confident that the Lord God is there to look after him. This gives him immense peace and joy.

Just like light of the flame of a candle does not need any other source of light to illuminate it, the feeling of spirituality and blessedness that comes with Bhakti is self-generated and independent of any other things. To wit, Bhakti does not need props to support it. A devotee does not need a certificate to prove that he loves his Lord God; even if the world won't believe him, it matters not to him in the least.

What is the evidence of Bhakti; how can one know that Bhakti has developed in his heart; what is its best manifestation? This is answered in the next verse no. 60.]

६० शान्तिरूपात् परमानन्दरूपाच्च

60 śāntirūpāt paramānandarūpāc ca

(60) It (Bhakti) is revealed in the form of supreme peace, bliss, beatitude and felicity. It is also akin to the attainment of supreme state of transcendental existence that is synonymous with pure Consciousness.

[To wit, Bhakti represents the best fruit one can hope to get by pursuing any spiritual path, and it is to attain eternal sense of spiritual bliss, peace, beatitude and felicity. These are the characteristic features of the Lord God who himself represents pure cosmic Consciousness. Hence, as soon as a devotee develops Bhakti and begins to experience these above virtues evolving spontaneously right inside his own self, he realizes that he has attained his beloved Lord God, who by the way is always present in his own heart in the form of his Atma.

The devotee feels supremely blessed and God-realised. It is this kind of devotee that sage Narad refers to in verse no. 53 earlier. A God-realised devotee is a personified form of bliss and peace like the Lord God himself.

In the next set of verses sage Narad tells about the way Bhakti, or devotion for the Lord God, can be practiced in day-to-day life by an ordinary person. He also outlines the obstacles or impediments that one encounters in this spiritual way of life.]

६१ लोकहानौ चिन्ता न कार्या निवेदितात्मलोकवेदत्वात्

61 lokahānau cintā na kāryā niveditātma-loka-vedatvāt

(61) A true devotee should not worry or get anxious at all about worldly losses (or gains for that matter) because he has surrendered himself to the beloved and sacred Lord of his heart to whom he has offered not only himself but all the fruits of his deeds and actions.

[In this context, refer to the previous verse nos. 34-35, 46-48, and verse no. 62 that follows herein below. A true devotee is one who has complete faith in his Lord God, who has completely and sincerely surrendered himself as well as all his deeds and action to his Lord God. So therefore, he does not feel that any result produced by his deeds or actions taken by him belong to him, and that even if there is a material loss he need not worry about it as the Lord would take full care of him.

He believes that nothing belongs to him; he is merely a servant of the Lord and is doing what is ordained or expected or commanded of him to do. Just like a faithful servant carries out the orders of his Master or Lord dispassionately and emotionlessly, the devotee goes about the affairs of his life in a neutral, detached and dispassionate manner.

This feeling, when it takes a firm hold in the heart and mind of a person, will obviously instill confidence in him, and make him stable, peaceful and calm from within.

Remember: Devotion for Lord God and love for him unfolds an umbrella over the believer's head, protecting him from the heat and rain symbolised by the countless miseries, torments and troubles of this gross mortal world, as well as securing his spiritual destiny.

The idea in this verse is further elaborated in the next verse no. 62 that essentially says that so long as one does not have the good fortune to develop a high level of spiritual awareness he should continue to live normally in life, but with a caveat—and it is that he should surrender all the results of his deeds and actions to Lord God; he must think that he is not doing anything for himself but for the Lord God, and that the Lord would take care of him. A devotee's life should be disciplined and ordered. This attitude will free him from all anxieties, worries, fears and consternations. His heart and mind will find eternal rest. That indeed is the greatest achievement for any human being. After all, what is the good of having the crown of the world over one's head if one can't sleep peacefully at night?]

६२ न तत्सिद्धौ लोकव्यावहारो हेयः किन्तु फलत्यागम् तत्साधनं च कार्यम् एव

62 na tatsiddhau lokavyāvahāro heyah kintu phalatyāgas tatsāadhanam ca kāryam eva

(62) But till the time purest form of devotion and love for the Lord God takes a firm root and becomes steady and robust in the inner-self of a spiritual aspirant, he should not abandon or renounce worldly activities. But what should be kept in mind is that one renounces or disassociates himself from the result of his activities. In this way he should continue to practice devotion and love for the Lord God.

[It is abundantly clear that verse no. 62 reiterates what has already been said in verse no. 61 herein above. The plain and simple idea is that as long as one does not have the good fortune to develop a high level of devotion for Lord God, he should be careful to follow at least one principle in life—and it is that while he continues to live life normally and goes about doing his duties, he must remember to surrender all the results of his deeds and actions to the Lord God. He must not get attached to his deeds by way of thinking that he is doing anything for gain; he must think that he is not doing anything for himself but for the sake of his Lord God of whom he is only a servant.

This attitude will help the spiritual aspirant become free from the burden of having to bear the consequences of his deeds, whether good or bad. As time passes, all the consequences of his past deeds would be consumed by way of sufferings he encounters during the course of his life in this world, and if he does not accumulate any newer burden of consequences of any deed then surely he would be freed from the baggage of ‘Karma’—the baggage of ‘deeds and their consequences’ that act as a drag on the Atma or the ‘pure self’ of any creature that prevents his final liberation from the cycle of birth and death. The result is that his spiritual journey forward becomes light and joyful. It’s like a passenger who travels light as compared to one who drags along a heavy suitcase full of his worldly belongings that he will not actually need during the journey but had carried them along out of sheer habit of keeping his possession with him.

A wise devotee is one who keeps in mind the doctrine that devotion for the Lord God does not mean running away from the world and not doing one’s ordained duties and upholding one’s responsibilities. Instead of absconding and abdicating from one’s moral responsibilities it is better to follow the principles laid down in these verses: that one should live like an ordinary man and do one’s ordained duties, but do them dispassionately, do them as a service to his Master and Lord, and surrender himself as well as the result of his deeds to this Master and Lord.

Remember: A wise and enlightened devotee must understand that the way outlined in verse nos. 61 and 62 is the correct and proper way to practice Bhakti.]

६३ स्त्रीधननास्तिकचरित् न श्रवणीयम्

63 strī-dhana-nāstika-caritraṁ na śravaṇīyam

(63) [Extending further on the concept of ‘not getting attached to the world while living in it’, sage Narad says—]

One must not pay attention to any talk about anything related to women, wealth, atheists and enemies (for such talk would only create agitation for the mind and the heart which a devotee is trying to keep calm and blissful, and such talk would distract him from his spiritual goal in life).

[In the context of what has been said in this present verse no. 63, refer to the previous verse nos. 43-45 where we read that a devotee should avoid bad or evil company at all costs because it is the greatest impediment in spiritual progress. This verse no. 63 along with the verses that follow herein below give us some more reasons why evil company ought to be avoided.

Refer also to verse nos. 27, 35 and 55 in this context where the need for total renunciation of the world and worldly things is emphasized for success in Bhakti. As has been noted in the commentary appended to verse no. 55, the mind needs to be focused on the Lord God if a devotee wishes to sincerely attain oneness with the Lord. Women, wealth and debates with non-believers only vex the spirit and disturb the concentration of the mind.

Talking or discussion about women and wealth cannot keep one dispassionate, and it is opposite to the philosophy of keeping one's self detached from the world. Similarly, non-believers are like enemies for a devotee, and arguing with them would not only be a fruitless exercise but it would also create unnecessary ill-will, doubts and perplexities for the soul. If one becomes uncertain about his goal and the path taken to reach that goal, the journey becomes full of worries and anxieties. That is why company of atheists is to be avoided at all costs.

Talks of women and wealth give rise to longing, passion and greed, while talking with non-believers lead to confusion and doubts, and even a mention of one's enemy creates anger. All these factors are counter-productive for a devotee. All such people who talk about worldly matters such as women and wealth, as well as those who denounce the Lord God, ridicule him and undermine his supremacy and authority, are to be treated like arch enemies by a devotee. He should be wary of them; they are definitely not his friends and would feel very happy when he falls from his path.]

६४ अभिमानदम्भादिकं त्याज्यम्

64 abhimāna-dambhādikaṁ tyājyam

(64) [Other things that should be assiduously avoided by a devotee are the following—]

Pride, ego, vanity and hypocrisy and other such negativities (abhimāna-dambhādikaṁ) should be abandoned by all means (because these negative qualities act as impediments in one's spiritual evolvment and progress).

[The devotee should be careful to be humble, simple-hearted and unpretentious. The Lord God does not like hypocrites and proud people. Pride, ego, haughtiness, vanity etc. are evil forces that pull the devotee down from his exalted position. Even in the secular world, these qualities are looked down upon; no one would praise a man who has these negativities in him.

Earlier we have learnt in verse nos. 43-45 that evil or bad company should be avoided at all costs. This verse gives us one more reason why we should do so. Evil people have the negative qualities mentioned here, and if one keeps contact with them one would be influenced by these negative traits. Other negative traits of evil persons have been enumerated in verse no. 63 herein above.

A devotee is a saintly person, and these negative qualities are not the characters of saints. The excellent virtues of saints and the negative qualities of non-saints have been enumerated by Lord Ram in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Doha no. 41.

These and other negative qualities are dominant during the present era known as Kaliyug. This has been reiterated by the crow-saint Kaagbhusund while he was describing the effects of Kaliyug to Garud in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 97—to Doha no. 102.]

६५ तद् अर्पिताखिलाचारः सन् कामक्रोधाभिमानादिकं तस्मिन् एव करणीयम्

65 tad arpitākhlilācārah san kāma-krodhābhimānādikaṁ tasminn eva karanīyam

(65) After having surrendered everything (including one's own self as well as the deeds done and their results) to the Lord God, if any trace of negativity such as desire, anger, pride etc. still linger in a person then he should also offer them to the Lord.

[Surrendering to the Lord God and offering everything to him means 'complete and unconditional surrender, and offering the good as well as the bad to the Lord God, keeping nothing with oneself'. If this is practiced in a wholesome manner then it would entail surrendering both the good and the bad to the Lord. When the scriptures say "surrender yourself and your deeds and their results to the Lord God" they mean not only the positive things but negative things as well.

Remember: The Lord God is not like a selfish worldly Master who would eye his servant's assets only, or is interested in extracting service only from his servant. The Lord knows fully well that no living is perfect, and so when he accepts someone he accepts him with all his goodness and badness. If surrendering means total surrender and renunciation of all claims to anything by the person who surrenders before the Lord, then it enjoins upon the Lord to accept everything lock stock and barrel. The Lord would go a step forward, and not backward—i.e. once he accepts a devotee he also accept to bear the burden of sins and evil qualities of his devotee. This is why the Lord is called so magnanimous, benevolent, kind, graceful, obliging, merciful and compassionate.

We read in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 44 that Lord Ram has told his ministers that he would welcome and accept Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka and the arch enemy of the Lord, even if he (Vibhishan) is evil, for it is sure that anyone who comes to surrender himself before the Lord is deemed to have absolved himself of all sins and cleaned all negative qualities that may have been present in him earlier, for no sooner does a person come in contact with the Lord than all the evils and vices vanish from him.”]

६६ तिरूपभङ्गपूर्वकं नित्यदास्यनित्यकान्ताभजनात्मकं प्रेम कार्यं प्रेमैव कार्यम्

66 tri-rūpa-bhaṅga-pūrvakaṁ nitya-dāsyā-nitya-kāntā-bhajanātmakaṁ prema
kāryaṁ premaiva kāryam

(66) True form of love and devotion for the Lord God is one that transcends the three factors that govern all relationships in this world. One must love and serve his Lord God for the sake of love and service alone, without any other factor interfering in this relationship. No other factor has any role to play in this relationship.

{This verse can be read as follows also: True form of love and devotion for the Lord God is one that transcends the influences of the three kinds of Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama)# that govern all relationships in this world. One must love and serve his Lord God for the sake of love and service alone, without any other factor interfering in this relationship.}

[#Refer verse nos. 47, 54-55 in the context of this verse no. 66.]

The devotee's relationship with his beloved Lord God is purely based on love and devotion. No other thing has any role to play in it. Two examples are cited here to explain the difference between a devotee's relationship with the Lord God and all other forms of relationships that exist in this world.

One is that which exists between a master and his servant, and the other which exists between a wife and her husband. Now let us examine these two relationships and see the difference between them and the one that exists between the devotee and the Lord.

In the first example, there is a person who is a 'master' and another who is a 'servant'. They are two independent individuals. The servant serves his master and the master receives his service, and whether the servant says it or not but there is some hidden expectation of a reward that becomes due by the virtue of this service. A servant will always be a servant, and the master will always be a master, and the two can't be exchange their status. But in the case of a devotee and his Lord God, no such distinction exists, for true devotion and love brings them so close to each other that all distinctions cease and they become one and indistinguishable—refer verse no. 41. Besides this, in this love between the devotee and the Lord God there is no desire for any reward of any kind because the devotee feels fully fulfilled; it is love and devotion for their own sake. In this context, refer verse nos. 4, 7, 54-55.

In the case of the master and the servant, service done by the latter unto the former is not an end in itself, but it is a mean to achieve some objective, some work or job that is to be done by the servant for and on behalf of the master. But in the case of a devotee and the Lord God, devotion and love between the two is an end in itself; there is no expectation—refer verse no. 26.

The same thing applies to the relationship between a husband and his wife. They may indeed love each other, but there is some subtle form of expectation that does exist between the two. A husband and wife are two independent individuals, they have their own priorities. But in the case of the devotee and the Lord God, all distinctions cease to exist, and therefore all expectations also cease to exist. The Lord God becomes the life and breath and the soul of the devotee; and the Lord treats the devotee in the same manner.

True form of love is enduring and independent of all factors and influences. For example, a master may become annoyed with his servant if the latter does not obey his command or serves him properly. The servant too would lose his enthusiasm in serving his master if he feels he is being neglected and sidelined, that the master is

not paying due attention to his efforts and sufficiently rewarding him, or that he favours someone else. But in the case of the devotee and the Lord God, this situation never develops—and it *should not* develop.

A husband loves his wife and vice versa, but often they may fight with each other over some trifling issue that may snowball into some major disaster. In the case of the devotee and the Lord God, this situation does not arise—and it *should not* arise either.

It is because in the case of all worldly relationships the factor of self-interest does come into play, whether it is acknowledged or not. But in the case of the Lord and his devotee, their mutual love for each other is free from any conditions. It is pure and simple love for the sake of love itself. A hint of how this love works in practice is given by citing the example of the Gopis and Lord Krishna in verse nos. 21-22 of Narad Bhakti Sutra.

How a true devotee should love and serve his Lord God, who is also his Master, and exult in this relationship, is beautifully brought out by Goswami Tulsidas in his epic Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 28-b when he says: “Everyone says that I am a servant of Lord Ram, and I too feel glad to hear and say this. It is the glory of the Lord that he gladly accepts that a fellow like me (who is so humble and ordinary) is his servant.”

Similar emotions are expressed by Tulsidas in his classic ‘Kavitawali’ (a version of the epic story of the Ramayana written in poetry form), Uttar Kand, verse no. 107.

Now, let us read what is said in ‘Kavitawali’, Uttar Kand, verse no. 107: “I have no caste and neither do I wish to find out about the caste of others. No one is of any use to me and neither do I wish to be of any use to others. My entire destiny (Lok-Parlok) and existence is in the hands of Lord Ram.

Tulsidas has the only reliance and succour in the name of Sri Ram. The people are utterly foolish—they do not understand that the ‘Gotra’ (race, caste) of the servant is the same as that of his master. I do not bother whether I am called a saint or not, or whether I am called good or bad. Whatever and howsoever I am, I belong to Sri Ram. Am I lying at the doorstep of anybody? Why are the people so much bothered about who I am, what my caste is, whether I am good or bad? Why don’t they mind their own business?

{Tulsidas laments that the people are more concerned about which class of the society a person belongs to, or what his calling or status in the society is, or how learned he is, etc. Tulsidas wonders, ‘How does it matter?’

If a man does not have devotion and love for Lord Sri Ram than his taking birth in a high caste, or being extremely successful in life by acquiring fame and money, or being very learned in the scriptures so much so that he might know them forwards and backwards—all these and such other achievements are null and void Tulsidas says that though he has none of the worldly achievements a man usually yearns for, he still considers himself extremely successful and fulfilled because he has sincere and abiding devotion and love for Lord Ram. For him nothing else matters.”}]

६७ भक्ता एकान्तिनो मुख्याः

67 bhaktā ekāntino mukhyāḥ

(67) Verily indeed and without gainsay, this form of single-minded love and devotion for Lord God (as described herein above in verse no. 66) is deemed to the best and the purest kind of Bhakti.

And therefore, the devotee who has this single-minded Bhakti in him, or who has pinpointed his mind and heart to develop this exclusive kind of Bhakti, and who has only one aim in life and it is to have pure form of Bhakti for the Lord God, such a devotee indeed becomes an exalted and pre-eminent person himself.

[Refer verse nos. 53-55 in this context. This kind of Bhakti is rare to attain, and once it is attained by the rare devotee, its existence becomes self-evident in the behaviour and attitude of that exalted person; he becomes pre-eminent. A divine halo surrounds him; he exhibits the characteristics of the Lord God himself as he becomes one with the Lord. This is because the glory, the divinity and the holy shine of the Lord begins to reflect in his own 'self' which is 'pure consciousness' known as the Atma.]

६८ कण्ठावरोधरोमाशुभिः परस्परं लपमानाः पावयन्ति कुलानि पृथिवीं च

68 kaṇṭhāvarodha-romāśrubhiḥ parasparam lapamānāḥ pāvayanti kulāni
pṛthivīm ca

(68) [Glorifying such exalted devotees, sage Narad says—] Such exalted and God-realised devotees (as mentioned in verse no. 68) become so highly emotional when talking with each that their throats get choked with emotion, their bodies become thrilled (and have goose bumps), tears (of joy) flow down their eyes, and they speak in broken words (because they become so ecstatic that they fail to find words to express themselves coherently and articulately).

Such rare devotees are indeed extremely fortunate and blessed themselves, and at the same time they sanctify their own families as well as the earth itself by their presence on it.

[Here, Narad has praised true devotees of the Lord God and essentially says that the devotee of the Lord is so lost in the thoughts of the Lord and remains ever submerged in the memory of the Lord that he loses awareness of his own self. They are not only extremely blessed themselves but their mere presence blesses all those around them.

A similar idea is expressed in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇa, 11/14/24 where the Lord says: “A person who is fully devoted to me, who speaks with a voice choked in emotions, whose heart melts with affection for me and my memory, who weeps incessantly (because he always remembers me and longs to meet me; who feels sad at his separation from me even for a moment), who laughs and sings and dances in ecstasy whenever he remembers me (and my worldly plays and tricks)—verily indeed, such a person blesses the whole world by his presence in it.”

When sage Sutekṣhaṇa came to know that Lord Rāma was coming to meet him, his condition was similar to the one described in this verse. It is narrated in Rām Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-15 that precede Doha no. 10 which say: “When the sage realized that the Lord is coming his way, he became exhilarated and ecstatic with joy. The illustrious sage became numbed with a surge of love for the Lord inside his being. It is indeed impossible to describe his emotional, mental and physical condition. He could not see the direction or the path on which he was going,

as all sense of orientation was lost on him. He did not know who he was and where he was going. He started walking forwards and backwards like an intoxicated man. Sometimes he danced, and at other times he sang merrily the glories of the Lord. Finally, he sat down motionless in the middle of the path with a body thrilled, his bristling hairs standing on their ends, and the skin full of goose bumps like the skin of the jack fruit.”

Lord Shiva, the most enlightened of the Gods, has also endorsed this view in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 127 where he tells his consort Uma: “Listen Uma. Blessed is the family and honoured is the world in which an exalted and an illustrious devotee of Lord Ram (a personified form of the Supreme Being) is born.”

The next verse no. 69 further glorifies such devotees.]

६९ तीर्थीकुर्वन्ति तीर्थानि सुकर्मिकुर्वन्ति कर्माणि सच्चास्त्रीकुर्वन्ति शास्त्राणि

69 tīrthī-kurvanti tīrthāni su-karmī-kurvanti karmāṇi sac-chāstrī-kurvanti śāstrāṇi

(69) Such devotees sanctify even the holy places of pilgrimage (known as ‘Tirtha’) by their presence in them (because their aura of holiness and divinity neutralizes any traces of sinfulness and worldly vices that are normally prevalent in such places).

They add glory to the principle of doing deeds and taking actions which are an invariable part of life in this world (i.e. whatever such exalted devotees do can be safely emulated by others as the deeds done by devotees are deemed to be holy and in accordance with the sanctity of the scriptures).

And finally, they also lend authority to the scriptures themselves (because their lives are living examples of what the scriptures teach and mean).

[Three points are noted here. Places of pilgrimage are not free from worldly corruption. But when true devotees of the Lord live there, they lend their own holiness and divinity to the place. Whatever sinfulness and vices that may be present in such places, they are rendered ineffective by the presence of the Lord’s devotee there. When a pilgrim visits such places he would meet saintly persons and devotees of the Lord God, and this would have a positive spiritual impact upon the pilgrim. Merely taking bath in rivers and performing rituals are of no use if the inner-self is not cleansed and the right path is not known. This is made possible by the presence of saintly devotees in holy places. This is an extension of what has been already said in the previous verse no. 68 about the devotees blessing the earth by their presence.

The second point is about deeds and actions. A true devotee would always act righteously and conscientiously. He will be mindful of the fact that whatever he does is a service to the Lord God and an offering on his part to the Lord. So he is always careful that his deeds and actions are not tainted, as a tainted thing can’t be offered to the Lord God. This means that his life as a whole becomes sanctified and holy; every action and deed of his will inherently and involuntarily be in accordance with the sanction of the scriptures even though he may not be specifically conscious of it. In fact, the actions and deeds of a true devotee of the Lord God would be an example for others to emulate as they would not only make him fulfilled and contented but also bring him closer to the Lord God.

In the same vein, the life and deeds of devotees are living examples of the teaching of the scriptures. If one were to verify the truthfulness of the words of the scriptures and see them practiced and bearing fruits, he would not have a better example than the devotee to satisfy his quest.

Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇ, 4/30/37 it is said that: “How can someone who wants to find freedom from the fear of transmigration not welcome the meeting with pious souls who are the devotees of the Lord, and who go from place to place with the intention of purifying these places (with the touch of the dust of their feet) and blessing other souls (by their communion).”

Again, it is said by Yudishthira to Vidura in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇ, 1/13/10 that: “Oh Lord! Devotees of God who are like you are not only holy themselves but they also revive the holiness of the so-called sacred places (that have become polluted by the contact of sinful persons), for verily indeed such devotees represent the supreme Lord Vishnu himself as the Lord resides in their hearts.”

We read in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 2 that: “The groups of exalted saints and sages are like living pilgrimage places on earth. Nay, the places where they live also become a holy place.”

Refer to verse no. 71 herein below in the context of what has been said in this present verse no. 69.]

७० तन्मयाः

70 tanmayāḥ

(70) Verily indeed, such exalted devotees of the Lord God (as the ones referred to in the previous verses) are completely and absolutely absorbed or engrossed in the thoughts of the Lord (and that is why they lose awareness of themselves and the world surrounding them, and instead they live in an ethereal world marked by profound ecstasy, bliss and blessedness as specifically narrated in verse no. 68).

[In the context of this verse, refer to the earlier verse nos. 41 and 68.

We have already read about the transcendental state of the mind and the sublime level of emotions that are so characteristic of God-realised devotees in verse no. 68. The present verse gives us the reason why they appear to behave in the odd manner that they exhibit. It is because they don't live at a humdrum plane of gross existence in which other mortal humans live; they live at a plane of existence which is much above and far beyond this plane, and therefore a common man can't comprehend their behaviour because he has never ever experienced such an exalted existence.

These blessed devotees remain perpetually submerged in the thoughts and memory of their beloved Lord God; at one moment they would weep and at the other moment they would laugh, oblivious of the world and the people surrounding them. Worldly people think that they have gone out of their heads, that they have lost their senses; but it is not that at all. Worldly people simply can't understand or fathom the depth of the huge ocean of love for the Lord God that has erupted inside their heart, with its heaving waves completely drowning them and overwhelming their entire existence.

Just as the river that falls into the ocean becomes one with the ocean and as vast and fathomless as the latter, and after this merger it becomes impossible to separate the river from the ocean, so likewise these blessed and God-realised devotees too become one with and inseparable from the Supreme Being, and they attain an eclectic state of existence that is at once eternally blissful, ethereal, sublime and beyond understanding.

They become God-saturated; they are embodiments of the Lord God. The next verse no. 71 describes the impact of such holy souls.]

७१ मोदन्ते पितरो नृत्यन्ति देवताः सनाथा चेयं भूर् भवति

71 modante pitaro nr̥tyanti devatāḥ sa-nāthā ceyam bhūr bhavati

(71) The ancestors of such blessed devotees of the Lord God rejoice that one of their descendents has attained such an exalted level of spiritual existence that makes their entire lineage fulfilled and honoured.

Likewise, even the Gods and other exalted Beings dance in joy and exult when they find that a soul (i.e. the devotee) has attained success in becoming self-and-God realized (and has qualified to join them to enhance the glory of their community).

And the earth feels elated that it has been blessed by a noble soul who has sanctified its dust and has made it a holy place to live in.

[In this context, refer to the earlier verse no. 69.

Here, the term ‘ancestors’ refers not only to the forefathers of a saintly devotee but to the whole of mankind, and by extension to the whole of the world. To wit, everyone feels happy that they have at least some good person in their midst who is their true and selfless friend and guide, to whom he can turn to for advice and help in difficult situations, for otherwise he would find himself marooned and friendless in a world that is full of selfishness and is driven by vested interests, deceit and corruptions.

Saintly souls affect entire generations, and their influence is felt far and wide. When sinful people create a burden for the earth and its inhabitants, when evil forces cause torments and horrors for the world and its creatures, saints and holy souls help to restore order and a sense of propriety and righteousness to the general disorderliness and perversion that pervades everywhere. They help to balance the negativity in the world with their own positive virtues. They act as the light of the candle that would help remove the all-pervading darkness that creates fear in the heart of all living beings.

Verily indeed, they act as the soothing balm for a creature who is suffering from spiritual miseries and torments in this world dominated by countless delusions, doubts, confusions and consternations. They act as the best friend and guide for all, showing them the correct path and helping them extricate themselves from the dark pit in which they find themselves fallen.

They are like the life-giving rain for the spiritual welfare of the creatures of this world, because otherwise this world would be like a parched and barren place full of thorns due to the all-pervading presence of sins, vices and evil qualities everywhere.

This unique quality of saintly souls that their advent is for the general good of the world has been highlighted in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 21 that precedes Doha no. 121 where it is said that: “The rise of saints and those with saintly nature gives joy to the whole world just like the rising of the full moon because it removes the fear of darkness in the night.”

The glory of devotees of the Lord God and how they make their families and the world honoured by their presence in their midst has been expressly stated by Lord Shiva, the most enlightened of the Gods, in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 127 where he tells his consort Uma: “Listen Uma. Blessed is the family and honoured is the world in which an exalted and an illustrious devotee of Lord Ram (the personified form of the Supreme Being) is born.”

The next two Sutras, i.e. verse nos. 72-73, describe the nature and characters of such God-realised devotees and holy souls.]

७२ नास्ति तेषु जातिविद्यारूपकुलधनक्रियादिभेदः

72 nāsti teṣu jāti-vidyā-rūpa-kula-dhana-kriyādi-bhedaḥ

(72) Those who have reached the state of spiritual perfect-ness and the highest level of realization of the Truth, they practice exemplary level of equanimity and non-distinction. For them, there is no distinction based on caste, religion, culture, physical features of beauty or ugliness, family and wealth, or vocation and profession etc.

[To wit, truly self-realised and God-realised souls see their Lord God everywhere. They are aware of the fact that this physical body is not the true identity of a person, but that it is the pure conscious soul which is a person’s true self and identity. This soul is also called the Atma. This Atma, which is pure consciousness, is the same in all living beings, and it is an eternal and universal entity that is independent from the gross physical body of all living beings. Since the Atma is the true ‘self’ of a living being as opposed to the gross body, and this Atma is the same in all of them, there is no cause to differentiate between two persons based on their caste, religion or family.

According to the principles of metaphysics, the world and everything related to it are perishable and gross. External occupations that a person engages in are due to the cumulative effects of his past deeds that condition his soul to think and behave in a particular way and engage in a particular vocation or profession that would fit in with the temperament that the person has inherited from his past. But that is not the ‘true nature of his Atma’—because the Atma is neutral and holy as it is pure cosmic Consciousness; the Atma is eternally fulfilled and contented, and it does not want to get involved in anything related to the gross world. The Atma has no likes and dislikes; the Atma does not distinguish between this and that.

Actually it is the deluded mind, aided and abetted by the sense organs of the gross body wishing self-gratification, that prevail upon a person and sufficiently delude him to make distinctions between two imaginary things in this world—such as this is mine and that is your; this is beautiful and that is ugly; this is gain and that is loss; this is making me happy and that makes my unhappy. For a self-realised soul, no such thing exists.

Hence, a person who has become enlightened and self-realised, i.e. a devotee who has attained God-realisation, is free from such gross considerations pertaining to

this gross world as the concept of ‘this and that’—for there is no such thing for him. He would see uniformity in this world and remain calm and unruffled because he sees his Lord God everywhere in this world instead of the grossness of the world that creates so much diversity and a sense of distinction and differentiation.

The Lord recognizes only one relationship, he adores only one quality in a person—and it is that of devotion and love. Nothing else matters for him. Since the Lord’s true devotee is one like him, it follows that the devotee too does not distinguish between anybody based on worldly considerations or criterions. We read about this at two places in Ram Charit Manas as follows:-

(a) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 35 where Lord Ram told Sabari: “Listen oh noble lady! I know of only one relationship—and it is of Bhakti (devotion). High Caste, society, family, kith and kin, clan, religion, honour, wealth, strength, power and authority, qualities, abilities and skills—none of them matter to me, and if a person does not have the virtue of Bhakti in him he is no good to me like a cloud that has no rain in it.”

(b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 127 where Lord Shiva concludes by saying: “A person who has devotion for Lord Ram’s holy feet, if he worships the Lord’s holy feet and has reverence for them then he is deemed to be all-knowing and omniscient, is said to possess excellent virtues and character, is regarded as most wise, realised and an expert in all spiritual knowledge and skills, is like an ornament of the world as he is the most exalted and an enlightened being, is very munificent and generous as he is a bestower of knowledge and can grant blessings upon others, is a follower of the auspicious path of righteousness, probity, propriety, and noble conduct and thought, and is regarded as a saviour of his entire clan and race. (1-2)

A person who worships Lord Ram sincerely, without pretensions or deceit, and with a pure inner-self is regarded as being an expert in spiritual principles as well as the most wise and enlightened soul in this field.

Verily indeed, such a person is deemed to be well-versed in the essence of the Vedas as he understands correctly and fully the meaning and objective of their teaching.

Forsooth, such a person is perfect in learning and knowledge, and hence a perfect seer; he is most sagacious and erudite.

And he is so steadfast in his belief and faith that he is not affected by his detractors, or deflected from his path by delusions and confusions. (3-4)”

Why is there no distinction or differentiation? This is answered in the next verse no. 73.]

७३ यतस् तदीयाः

73 yatas tadiyāḥ

(73) All of them (i.e. all the creatures; all living beings; all the devotees; the entire creation for that matter) belong to him (the Lord God) alone (and to no one else). That is why there is no distinction or differentiation (between any two entities).

[As has been explained in the note appended to the previous verse no.72, the God-realised devotee is also one who is self-realised, one who has known the truth of the 'self', one who has experienced the presence of the Atma within himself as well as everywhere outside, who understands the fact that this Atma is a manifestation of the all pervading and eternal cosmic Consciousness that has also revealed its self in the form of the Supreme Lord whom the devotee worships and loves so much, and that this creation is a revelation of the Lord himself, that everything that exists is one or the other form of the same Lord God.

This spiritual awareness and eclectic understanding erases all causes of distinction or differentiation for an enlightened devotee. He begins to see his Lord in each unit of creation. Say, when this Truth dawns upon his mental horizon, where is the scope for thinking that this thing is different from that thing?

To wit, for a God-realised soul, everything is a revelation of the same Atma or the cosmic Consciousness that has also manifested in the divine form of the Lord God; that everything is an image of his Lord God who is one and non-dual.

External appearances are misleading just like the sight of the presence of water in the mirage seen in a hot desert. An apparently illiterate person may be spiritually highly evolved as compared to a scholar. A poor man may be exemplarily noble and charitable in his heart as compared to a selfish miser who may have huge wealth locked up in the cellar that would perish one day or eaten by termites and worms. So a wise devotee does not judge a person by his physical appearances or how he behaves in this world—for such things may hide the truth.

The verses that now follow herein below lay down further guidelines to be adhered to by true devotees of God.]

७४ वादो नावलम्ब्यः

74 vādo nāvalambyaḥ

(74) A true devotee must not get involved in controversies and engage in arguments.

[This principle helps the devotee avoid vexations of the spirit. Debates and arguments create perplexities and confusions as to what is true and what is not. Controversies enhance animosity and ill-will, and they rob the inner-self of peace and happiness.

The devotee must understand that this world is full of delusions and full of contradictions. So if he allows himself to be sucked in its vortex voluntarily then he will be responsible for all the woes such involvement would create for him, and he will find it extremely difficult to come out of it later on. He must understand that his goal in life is different, that it is to break free from the cycle of delusions and contradictions instead of getting sucked deeper into it. So one must be wise and act wisely by avoiding all arguments and debates regarding contradictory things pertaining to the gross and delusory world and its equally gross and delusory affairs.

A person who engages in arguments and debates thinks that he has a better or superior knowledge of any given subject than the other person who opposes him, and that he will be able to defeat him in logic. This creates a sense of pride and arrogance in that person, and these qualities are not liked by the Lord God at all, for the Lord loves the virtues of humility and simplicity in his devotees. Refer verse no. 27. Thus,

mindful of this factor, the devotee shuns all sorts of arguments to prove his point of view on any subject.

Remember: Arguments and debates have no end; one can go on arguing and debating on any subject without reaching any conclusion. So therefore, what is the use of creating unnecessary vexations for the spirit; why would any rationale man create a situation that would churn the surface of the otherwise tranquil ocean to create a mighty wave that has the potential of rocking his own boat symbolized by the peace of heart and stability of mind?

The Brahm-Sutra verse no. 1/1/11 states that: “Argument does not establish anything”.

Similarly, Vedanta Sutra, verse no. 2/1/11, says: “Logical reasoning is inconclusive.”

In Kathopanishad, 1/2/9, it is said that: “That essence (spiritual Truth; pure Consciousness) cannot be attained through arguments and logic.” This Upanishad is the 1st one amongst the Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

We read in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 74 that: “Those who understand the Truth about Lord Ram (the personified form of the Supreme Lord), adore him, without engaging in any arguments.”

The crow-saint Kaagbhusund tells Garud, the celestial mount of Lord Vishnu, in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 90 that: “Those who are wise and have a stable mind abhor all sorts of arguments and doubting while they adore and worship Lord Ram who is a fount of mercy and compassion, and who gives joy to all.”

The next verse no. 75 explains these points further.]

७५ बाहुल्यावकाशत्वाद् अनियतत्वाच् च

75 bāhulyāvakāśatvād aniyatatvāc ca

(75) There can be endless views on any given subject, and no certain conclusion can be reached. So arguments and debates leading to controversies are best avoided.

[This verse explains why one should not engage in arguments and debates. Refer to the note appended to the previous verse no. 74 which has already explained this principle elaborately.

The world is a vast place full of diverse things, and endless permutations and combinations of these things. So it is well nigh impossible to prove any one thing conclusively. A wise man should be focused on his goal; he should aim at reaching his destination within the limited time he has in his hands before death comes calling. Scholarship and worldly acclaim will not liberate his soul from the quagmire in which it has found itself if the person does not listen to the sane advice given by wise and enlightened saints and sages as is done by sage Narad in his present ‘Book of Spiritual Advice’ known as the “Bhakti Sutras”. Narad Bhakti Sutra.

In Srimad Bhagvat Geeta, Canto 3, verse no. 31, Lord Krishna says: “Those who follow my teaching without arguing and raising petty objections will have supreme knowledge of the Truth.”

It is said in Kaivalya Upanishad, 1/ 2, that: “Know the Truth by contemplation, faith and devotion. These are necessary, while nothing else is. If one does not follow this advice, one would be completely lost.”

But does this injunction means that one should stop thinking and become blind? The next verse no. 76 addresses this question.]

७६ भक्तिशास्त्राणि मननीयानि तद्बोधककर्माणि करणीयानि

76 bhakti-śāstrāṇi mananīyāni tad-bodhaka-karmāṇi karaṇīyāni

(76) Books or sacred scriptures that deal with the virtue of Bhakti (devotion and love for Lord God) should be studied and reflected upon, and their teachings followed diligently.

[One must study devotional literature and follow their instructions in practical life. The message contained in devotional books should be correctly understood and followed in life. These books will show a spiritual aspirant the path to God-realisation, how to actually achieve this goal in life, and warn him of the different pitfalls that he may encounter on the way as well as give him advice on how to overcome them. These books also highlight the characters of exalted devotees of the Lord God, which in turn helps others to seek such persons for guidance.

One must be careful to avoid reading books that refute the existence of God and give endless arguments in favour of this idea. This will create doubts and confusions in the mind of a devotee which would lead him astray and fall from his path. This situation would be the same as the one referred to in verse nos. 74-75 where it is said that a devotee should not get involved in arguments and debates as it leads to the vexation of the spirit and cause endless delusions.

A wise person would read them personally, listen to discourses given on them by wise teachers, and consult saints to remove any trace of doubt that he may still have. These books are conducive to one's spiritual growth.

In the context of this verse, refer to the earlier verse no. 12 which also lays emphasis on the study of scriptures to acquire correct knowledge about devotion.

There are many such books on the theme of devotion for Lord God, such as the present book Narad Bhakti Sutra. Then there are others, such as the Shandilya Bhakti Sutra, the Ramayan (that narrates the life and times of Lord Ram who was an incarnation of the Supreme Being), Lord Krishna's Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, Srimad Bhagvad Mahapurāṇa, etc.

In the next verse no. 77, sage Narad says that one must embark on this spiritual journey forthwith, without waiting any further and procrastinating. Perhaps he was addressing a category of people who can't decide what to do.]

७७ सुखदुःखेच्छालाभादित्यक्ते काले प्रतीक्षमाणे क्षणार्धम् अपि व्यर्थं न नेयम्

77 sukha-duḥkhecchā-lābhādi-tyakte kāle pratīkṣamāṇe kṣaṇārdham api vyartham na neyam

(77) One must not waste even a fleeting moment in embarking on the path of devotion and love for Lord God in the hope that at some point of time in the future he would be

able to follow this spiritual path easily when he is able to overcome the emotions of joys and sorrows, of pleasures and pain, and is also able to renounce all desires for worldly gain, etc. in a natural way.

[A person should not wait for some good or right opportunity that he thinks would come in the future that would help him to walk on the path of devotion and love for Lord God easily. He is warned here that such chance may never come at all.

This world is transient and perishable, life is transient and momentary. Similarly, the world is an endless ocean of wants and temptations, and they will never end; renunciation may never come if one does not renounce now and here. So that distant dream of a good and right opportunity when one would start practicing devotion for Lord God may never materialize at all.

One must start doing good work immediately without wasting any time. So this verse essentially says that a wise person is one who would start on his spiritual journey right at the moment when this thought comes to him. He must not waste time and think that he would first engage in quenching his thirst for enjoyment of the world and then once he is satisfied it would be easy for him to renounce this world and follow the path of devotion and spiritualism as this path needs renunciation as a basic step for which he is not prepared at the moment. That utopian opportunity when he will have complete renunciation of the world with a burning eagerness in his heart to find the Lord God by having love and devotion for him will always elude him if he thinks he should wait for it. The best time to have devotion and love for Lord God is right *now*!]

७८ अहिंसासत्यशौचदयास्तिक्यादिचारित्र्याणि परिपालनीयानि

78 ahimsā-satya-śauca-dayāstikyādi-cāritryāṇi paripālaniyāni

(78) A spiritual aspirant (i.e. a devotee) should inculcate noble virtues in him and practice an auspicious and righteous way of life. For instance, he must diligently practice an exemplary level of non-violence and non-injury to others in all its forms (direct or indirect), truthfulness and honesty (at all levels of existence), cleanliness and purity (internal and external), mercy and compassion (for all the creatures), firm faith in the Lord God, virtuousness of character, etc.

[Reading spiritual books, keeping company of saints, renouncing the world, worshipping the Lord God and other spiritual ways of life would have a naturally purifying effect upon a devotee. But he must also be careful to note the special characteristic features of a holy person enumerated in this verse as they act as milestones that would tell him how much success he has obtained in his spiritual path.

It would be noted that all these virtues are naturally present in a saintly person. Lord Ram has himself lauded them in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 46, and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Doha no. 38.

The virtues listed in this verse are the inner qualities in a person that would make him a true devotee of the Lord God, and an embodiment of the Lord himself. These qualities are the noble values one honours in life and should pursue; they are

the virtues one should inculcate in his own inner self; he should imbibe them so that they become a part of his personal character.

These practices help a spiritual aspirant to thoroughly clean his inner-self. Now, the next question is: What should one do when the mind and the inner-self has become calm and purified, and hence is now ready to welcome the Lord God and have devotion for him? This is answered in the next verse no. 79.]

७९ सर्वदा सर्वभावेन निश्चिन्तैर् भगवान् एव भजनीयः

79 sarvadā sarva-bhāvena niścintair bhagavān eva bhajanīyaḥ

(79) Once the inner-self has become calm and purified, one becomes free from all anxieties regarding everything pertaining to the world and its sense objects. Thus, being carefree from worries, one should focus one's attention exclusively to having devotion for the Lord God and worshipping him.

[In the context of what has been said in this verse, refer to the previous verse nos. 7-10, 16-17, 33, 37 and 48 also. The reward for such single-minded worship is highlighted in verse no. 80 that follows herein below.

When true renunciation sprouts and takes a firm root in a devotee's inner-being, he is now ready to devote himself full-time to worshipping his beloved Lord God. This 'worshipping' takes the form of love and remembrance of the Lord, singing the Lord's divine glories, remaining submerged in the thoughts of the Lord, doing selfless service to the Lord, and surrendering all fruits of one's actions and deeds to him. All these means of worshipping the Lord have been discussed earlier in different verses.

For a person who has known the truth of the Lord God, there is nothing better than worshipping the Lord with his entire being, for this gives him eternal joy and delight unbound.

There is an excellent verse in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand which pointedly reiterates this spiritual truth. In its Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 34, Lord Shiva tells his consort Uma: "Listen Uma! Those who know the true nature of Lord Ram (who is a personified form of the Supreme Being), they think of nothing else but worshipping the Lord (by way of having unwavering and deepest form of devotion and love for the Lord)."

Lord Krishna says in Srimad Bhagvat Geeta, Canto 18, verse nos. 65-66: "Surrender (give) your mind to me, have devotion for me, worship me and bow (pay respect) to me. If you do it, you will certainly come to me and me alone. I promise you this, for then you will be exceptionally dear to me. Surrender all your duties to me who am the Supreme Lord of the world, and become carefree by taking refuge with me. Don't worry then for I will take care of you and free you of all your sins."]

८० स कीर्त्यमानः शीघ्रम् एवाविर्भवत्य् अनुभावयति भक्तान्

80 sa kīrtiyamānaḥ śīghram evāvirbhavaty anubhāvayati bhaktān

(80) When the devotee invokes the divine glories of the Lord God (remembers the Lord, recites his glories and holy name), the Lord reveals himself immediately to him. The blessed devotee feels the divine presence of the Lord God always near and inside himself.

[Refer to verse nos. 17, 37 and 55 in this context.

In the previous verse no. 79 it has been said that a devotee should worship the Lord sincerely after having renounced everything else. If he does so then the Lord promises him that he will manifest himself before him without delay.

We read in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 116 that: “There is no difference between the Lord’s two forms, one with attributes (Saguna) and the other without attributes (Nirguna)—so assert great sages and seers. But the invisible form of the Lord that has no attributes becomes visible to a devotee because the Lord reveals himself due to the devotee’s love for him and his wish to see the Lord in a physical form.”

A true devotee has only one wish, and it is to have unwavering devotion for the Lord God. His only prayer is that the Lord should abide in his heart forever. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 21 that precedes Doha no. 11 where sage Sutikshan has made this request to Lord Ram.

A devotee who worships the Lord after abandoning all other hopes and desires is promised by the Lord that such a devotee is very dear to him and the Lord loves him from the core of his heart. To wit, the Lord would therefore reside in the heart of such a devotee and be always close to him—refer Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Doha nos. 129, 130 and 131, as well as (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 87.

In verse nos. 7, 9, 10-11 of Canto 10 in Srimad Bhagvat Geeta, Lord Krishna also reiterates the same thing. In verse no. 7 the Lord says: “Those who know my supreme reality and divinity get established in me because they would develop unfaltering devotion for me.” In verse no. 9 he says: “A devotee who has surrendered himself and his life to me, who has his mind fixed upon me, who speaks of me and enlightens others about me—such a devotee remains contented, he takes delight in me and he abides in me (i.e. in remembering me and talking about me he finds the greatest of joy and contentedness).” In verse no. 10 the Lord enjoins: “Those who are united with me by practice of meditation, those who worship me with love and devotion, I grant them wisdom by which they come to me.” In verse no. 11 the Lord says: “I bless such devotees by showering my grace upon them and reside in their hearts. This removes the darkness of ignorance from their inner-self, and I grant them with the light of enlightenment.”

We have read in verse no. 34 that learned teachers have enumerated a number of ways by which devotion for Lord God can be practiced. The verses that follow enumerate these virtues. Let us recapitulate these spiritual virtues quickly now. To become God-realised and attain eternal blessedness that accompanies this spiritual achievement, a devotee should follow certain spiritual disciplines. Some of them are listed here in brief:-

(i) Practice renunciation and self-restraint (verse nos. 7-10, 35, 48); (ii) worship the Lord God, always remember him and sing his divine glories (verse nos. 16-17, 19, 36, 37, 55, 77, 79-80); (iii) have company of saintly persons and avoid evil company (verse nos. 38, 42-44, 63); (iv) overcome anger, desires, infatuations, confusions, doubts and irrational thinking (verse no. 44); (v) overcome attachment (verse no. 46); (vi) rise above the effects of the three types of Gunas and thus become

neutral and stable (verse no. 47); (vii) renounce the fruits of deeds and actions and offer everything to the Lord (verse nos. 11,19, 48); (viii) develop the purest form of love for Lord God, a love that is not conditioned by any factor, a love that is eternal and spontaneous (verse nos. 19—21, 54-55, 66); (ix) to completely surrender to the Lord God and leave everything to him (verse nos. 35, 61, 65); (x) overcome pride, ego, haughtiness and hypocrisy etc. (verse no. 64); (xi) not get involved in debates, controversies and arguments (verse no. 75); (xii) study and practice the teaching of devotional books (verse no. 76); (xiii) practice non-violence, compassion, truthfulness, purity and faith (verse no. 78); (xiv) practice humility and simplicity (verse no. 27); (xv) acquire knowledge and devotion simultaneously as they complement each other, for devotion without knowledge would be blind faith which would certainly be open to doubting and confusion as well as the fear of fall (verse nos. 12-13, 23, 29); (xvi) avoid women, wealth and atheists (verse no. 63); (xvii) remember the Lord God every moment of life (verse nos. 68, 70).]

८१ त्रिसत्यस्य भक्तिर् एव गरीयसी भक्तिर् एव गरीयसी

81 trisatyasya bhaktir eva garīyasī bhaktir eva garīyasī

(81) It is a universal and unequivocal truth that in all the three worlds, in all the three planes of time, in all the three phases of life (viz. the past, the present, and the future)—there is nothing better than having Bhakti (devotion) for the Lord God. Bhakti is indeed the best means for spiritual welfare that a person should accept; Bhakti is surely the best means for a person to accept for his spiritual welfare; Bhakti alone is the best means that a person should accept for his spiritual welfare.

[Refer also to the previous verse nos. 33, 58 and 79 that say that Bhakti is the best of all spiritual practices.

The word “*trisatyasya*” means ‘a truth that is repeated three times to stress that there is no doubt about its authenticity and veracity’. It is like an oath taken in a court of law to emphasize that what has been said is the absolute and the only truth, that there is no buts and ifs in it.

It also means ‘a truth that stands good in all the three phases or aspects of existence’, such as the past, the present and the future.

An observation is done at three levels—the physical level of one’s personal observation, the oral level when one hears of it from someone else who speaks about it, and the mental level when one analyses anything to decide the authenticity and veracity of what has been observed personally and heard being spoken about by others. In the case of Bhakti, all the three levels of observations endorse the fact there is nothing better than Bhakti for a person’s spiritual welfare.

There is one more very interesting interpretation of the word “*trisatyasya*” appearing in the text. It means ‘an entity that is true in all the three phases of existence and time—the past, the present and the future’. What is that entity? The obvious answer is: ‘the Supreme Being’, the ‘Lord God’, the ‘Lord of the World’, ‘the Brahm’, the ‘Cosmic Consciousness’. So in this context, this verse would definitely mean “Bhakti or devotion for the Supreme Lord of the World is the best form of spiritual activity that a person can engage in his life, for it ensures his welfare in the

present life as well as in the future life, besides destroying all the sins that he may have committed in his past life and brought forward by him to his present life.”

The fact that the Lord God is the only Truth in existence is affirmed in *Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇa*, 10/2/26, which says: “The Lord is the only Truth in all the three phases of time. Devotion for this Lord is therefore the only true way of having this virtue. To wit, there may be many other deities who are all to be paid respect, but for one’s own spiritual welfare he is advised to surrender himself to none but the Supreme Lord alone and worship him exclusively as he is the only truthful Lord of creation.”

There are other verses in *Narad Bhakti Sutra* that also reiterate this basic fact about Bhakti—that it is the best tool one has for achieving his spiritual goal in life. Refer earlier verse nos. 25, 33.

The glories of Bhakti are so immense that one can go on writing endlessly about it but would still find no end to it. In this context we can cite two instances from *Ram Charit Manas* where the magnificence and excellence of Bhakti have been highlighted.

In *Ram Charit Manas*, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-15 that precede Doha no. 120, the saintly crow Kaagbhusund asserts as follows: “I have elucidated at length to you about the principles governing Gyan (esoteric knowledge pertaining to the mysteries of the soul, and how to attain liberation and deliverance as well as beatitude through this path; gnosis).

Now listen carefully about the profound glories, the stupendous spiritual powers, and the magnificent virtues and importance of Bhakti (devotion for Lord God) which is like a priceless Gem. (1)

Oh Garud! Lord Ram’s Bhakti (having devotion, affection, love, faith, belief in the Lord; submission and surrender before him; serving him selflessly) is like a Gem known as ‘Chintaamani’—a magical and priceless self-illuminated gem that removes all sorts of worries and miseries of a person who possesses it.

Any person’s heart where it (‘the priceless gem symbolising the eclectic spiritual virtue of Bhakti’) is found --- (2)

--- is well illuminated day and night. This mystically empowered Gem is self-illuminated, and so it does not need a lamp, ghee (clarified butter) or a wick to keep it lighted with a fluorescent shine. (3)

Once this wonderful Gem is placed in the treasury (heart) of one’s inner-self, poverty symbolised by ‘Moha’ (worldly attractions, attachments and infatuation) does not torment him.

{This is because this Gem inherently possesses the power to remove poverty of all kinds. Whereas an ordinary Gem found in this world would remove sufferings arising out of lack of wealth and material things, the Gem in the form of Bhakti removes all sorts of spiritual troubles and worries of the devotee. ‘Moha’ is the root cause for all miseries and grief arising out of the various relationships that a creature establishes with the material, gross and perishable world. Bhakti diverts the attention of the creature from the illusive charm and false happiness that he thinks he would get in this mortal world of perishable things, the reason why he is attracted to the world and gets infatuated with it, to the world of eternal spiritual peace and happiness as well as contentedness that he gets by worshipping and having love and devotion for Lord Ram, the Supreme Being in a manifested form.

To wit, the bearer of this Gem does not have to suffer from the dearth of any 'spiritual riches' in the form of beatitude, blessedness, bliss, peace, happiness and contentedness in his life.}

The light that naturally emanates from this mystical Gem cannot be extinguished by the gust of wind represented by 'Lobha' (i.e. greed and temptations of the material sense objects of the world and the desire of the sense organs for gratification).

{This is because the light symbolising spiritual peace, beatitude, blessedness, bliss, happiness and contentedness that emanates from this mystical Gem known as 'Bhakti' comes from within it; it is self-generated. Therefore it needs no protection. It is also not like the light emanating from another Gem known as 'Gyan' because this latter Gem needs great care and constant polishing by way of following many strict spiritual observances and diligent practices to maintain its shine.

Hence, the Gem representing 'Bhakti' is not affected by any external factor like the case of an ordinary oil lamp whose light can be extinguished if there is a strong gust of wind, or the Gem known as 'Gyan' that needs constant care to maintain its brilliant shine for otherwise it would become dull and lustreless.} (4)

In the eternal light shining from this self-illuminated Gem of Bhakti, the darkness symbolising the powerful effects of 'Avidya' (ignorance that gives rise to delusions and its innumerable problems; lack of Vidya; lack of true and correct spiritual knowledge) is automatically eliminated.

{This is because 'light' and 'darkness' can't co-exist. The light of Bhakti dispels the overpowering fear arising out of ignorance and delusions that are like the darkness of night when one is overcome with the horrifying prospects of having to face so many ghosts and phantoms representing countless miseries, grief and torments associated with the mortal life in this gross world of transmigration.}

Hordes of moths representing the many sensual pleasures and material charms of this world fail to extinguish this light of Bhakti by attacking it from all sides.

{Moths are attracted in droves by the flame of a lamp. They crowd around it in such huge numbers that they create a virtual blanket around the flame and suffocate it; they also jump in the flame in hordes, resulting in the flame flickering and dying away gradually. In this metaphor, the countless sensual pleasures and material charms of the world fail to disturb the inner peace and happiness of a person who has devotion for Lord God in his heart.} (5)

Other insects representing 'Kaam' (lust, passion, longing) and other such wicked tormentors of the soul also aren't able to go near the person who has Bhakti enshrined in his heart. (6)

{The self-effusing light from this Gem helps to eliminate the darkness created by Avidya. The irritating group of insects represented by such negativities as Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, ego, pride and vanity) etc. fail to disturb the Jiva and dirty the environs of the Gem. In the case of an oil lamp, the insects are attracted to its light in their hordes, dance around its flame, get burnt, and die, littering the area around the flame and the lamp. Sometimes it often also happens that they die and fall in the oil and cover its surface with their carcasses, thereby suffocating the wick of its space and the flame of its air, and this results in the flame gradually dying away. In the case of the Gem no such thing can happen because there is no physical flame to attract the insects.

The net effect is that the person in whose heart Bhakti resides, the evil-mongering wicked fellows such as Kaam (worldly passions), Krodha (anger, wrath, fury), Lobha (greed) and their like, do not dare to come near him.}

For a person who has this Gem in the form of Bhakti in his heart, a poison turns into nectar, and an enemy or someone who harbours animosity towards becomes a friend.

Indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, no one can find true happiness, peace, bliss and contentedness without having this miraculous Gem. (7)

Again, such a fortunate person never suffers from any of the grievous emotional problems and spiritual woes known as 'Manas Roga' (literally meaning mental diseases arising out of emotional disturbances) from which countless creatures suffer interminably. (8)

Anyone in whose subtle heart dwells the Gem representing Bhakti for Lord Ram, such a person can never suffer from a trace of grief, misery and torment of any kind even in his dream. (9)

Therefore, a person is said to be sagacious, erudite, wise and intelligent if he makes an auspicious and all-out diligent effort to acquire this priceless spiritual Gem, and then carefully stores it or enshrines it in the treasury of his heart. To wit, a person who makes diligent effort to acquire this Gem of Bhakti is deemed to be the most wise, clever, intelligent and fortunate amongst all men. (10)

Though the astounding spiritual value and magnificent glory of this Gem (Bhakti) is so obvious in this world, yet one is not able to access or acquire it without the grace of Lord Ram. {This Gem known as 'Bhakti' is not like some precious jewel of this material world that one can find by making concerted effort to acquire it. This Bhakti can only be accessed if Lord Ram shows his grace and kindness upon a seeker.} (11)

Fortunately, the ways and means to access this valuable Gem are also very easy, but the irony is that those who are unlucky and ill-fated fail to employ these opportunities and remain deprived of this priceless jewel. (12)

The scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans are like the sacred mountains (because they are enormous in their size). The many enchanting stories and fascinating events associated with the life and time of Lord Ram are like the many mines and caves (of precious stones) that are found on these mountains. (13)

Saints and devotees are the people who know the secret of these mines and caves, and how to extract the precious gems hidden in them (like expert minerologists do).

A wise mind and its intelligence is like the sharp pickaxe that is used to dig out the precious gems (representing spiritual rewards that are got by a person who pursues Bhakti).

Gyan (true and analytical knowledge) and Vairagya (renunciation, detachment and dispassion) are the two eyes of such saints and devotees (who are like the minerologists). (14)

{The scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans are like the holy Mountains; the divine story of Lord Ram, with its numerous versions and interpretations, are like the numerous mines (caves) in them (where spiritual secrets lie hidden and buried); the many sages and saints are the wise ones who know about them and their sacred location (i.e. they can unravel the mysteries of the story and explain them to the eager hearer); and the wise intellect and mind are like the spade, the shovel and the pick-axe which are to be used to unearth the gems hidden in them (i.e. to unravel the holiness, the divinity and spiritual message contained in the story of Lord Ram).

The two eyes needed to see this treasure are represented by the twin virtues of Gyan and Vairagya. One must have a deep and penetrating intellect to understand the import of the message contained in the divine story, and he must have the virtue of

renunciation and detachment from this world so that he can concentrate upon benefiting from this knowledge without getting constantly distracted and disturbed by the tug and pull of the mundane world.

To wit, in order to mine the spiritual treasure represented by Bhakti, one must have the two indispensable virtues of 'Gyan' and 'Vairagya'. Just like a blind person who stumbles and falls repeatedly, and it becomes too difficult for him to reach his destination, a spiritual aspirant who has no Gyan and Vairagya in him also finds it virtually impossible to access Bhakti that would grant him sustainable spiritual blessedness, beatitude, felicity, bliss, happiness, contentedness etc, as well as liberation and deliverance from all sorts of worldly sufferings that come naturally with Bhakti.

In the absence of Gyan and Vairagya, even if a person manages to find the Gem known as Bhakti, it would be too hard for him to protect it just like a blind man who may have a priceless gem in his possession but would not be able to protect it from thieves or even his jealous friends who are envious of his good fortune.

This observation is extremely significant in the context of earlier statements where it was said that Gyan is very cumbersome and one should try to steer clear of it. But by likening Gyan as one of the eyes of a wise spiritual seeker of Bhakti, its importance and value is established beyond doubt. In fact, 'Gyan' as one of the two main tools for accessing Bhakti, the other being 'Vairagya'. It is stressed here that Gyan plays an important role in one's spiritual welfare, and it should not be overlooked or undermined or neglected while one pursues Bhakti.

This is because without having true knowledge, enlightenment and wisdom, Bhakti becomes a blind pursuit. Like a blind man groping in the dark to reach his destination, and even if he manages to find what he has been searching for he is not sure of what he has found, a person who does not know his spiritual goal or whom he is worshipping, if he worships some God just because others are doing it, he is bound to falter easily and overcome with doubts and uncertainties when confronted by some fact that is beyond his understanding.

The simplest example we have is that of Garud himself in this Ramayan. He is an eternal companion of Lord Vishnu as he is the Lord's vehicle, his mount, but he too was overcome with doubt about the reality of Lord Ram, which led him to Kaagbhusund and listen to the story of Lord Ram and told about the truth of the Lord's actual identity. After having Gyan, or true knowledge of who the Lord was, Garud's doubts and confusions vanished. So the importance of 'Gyan' as an instrument to reinforce Bhakti cannot be underestimated.

Similarly, 'Vairagya' is essential for Bhakti to take a firm root in the heart of the devotee. A person can do one thing at a time; otherwise he would be too distracted to focus on his goal if he tries many things at the same time. If the mind and the heart of a spiritual aspirant are distracted by the countless temptations from the material objects of the world, if the aspirant fails to practice renunciation and detach himself from the world, he won't be able to focus on his actual goal of attaining spiritual blessedness. It is just like a college student or a researcher in an university who does not focus on his studies and wastes his time in worthless indulgences. Either he would fail his exams or pass with a very dismal grade.}

A man who searches for this Gem known as Bhakti with due sincerity and devotion (commitment and diligence) is sure to find it. This Gem is a treasury that is full of all happiness and joy for him; it is a giver of all happiness and joy to him. {To wit, Bhakti grants bliss, beatitude, felicity and blessedness to its adherents. It grants to

its followers liberation and deliverance from all miseries and sufferings. It bestows emancipation and salvation to the soul.} (15)”

Once again, we read in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 85 that Lord Ram has himself praised the virtues of Bhakti, declaring unequivocally that: “Bhakti is a mine or treasury of all joy, happiness and bliss.”

The excellence of Bhakti and its stellar ability to help the devotee get rid of the negative consequences of his sins has also been declared in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇa, 11/14/19, where Lord Krishna tells Uddhav: “Oh Uddhav! Even as a fire that is burning fully is easily and effortlessly able to reduce a huge stock or pile of firewood to ashes, Bhakti for me, done in whatsoever way, is able to burn one’s sins completely, and without trace.”]

**८२ गुणमाहात्म्यासक्तिरूपासक्तिपूजासक्तिस्मरणासक्
तिदास्यासक्तिसख्यासक्तिवात्सल्यासक्तिकान्तासक्त्या
त्मनिवेदनासक्तिनम्यासक्तिपरमविरहासक्तिरूपै कथाप्य् एकादशधा भवति**

82 guṇa-māhātmyāsakti-rūpāsakti-pūjāsakti-smaraṇāsak ti-dāsyāsakti-
sakhyāsakti-vātsalyāsakti-kāntāsakty-ā tma-nivedanāsakti-tan-mayāsakti-
parama-virahāsakti-rūpai kadhāpy ekādaśadhā bhavati

(82) Though Bhakti (devotion and love for the Lord God) is one and wholesome, yet it is expressed or it manifests itself in eleven different forms as follows:

- (i) Loving to glorifying the divine virtues and attributes of the Lord God.
- (ii) Loving the Lord God’s holy, divine form.
- (iii) Loving to offer worship to the Lord God and observing religious rituals dedicated to him.
- (iv) Loving to remember the Lord God and invoking him at all times of life.
- (v) Loving to do selfless service to and for the sake of the Lord God.
- (vi) Loving to be the Lord God’s friend; loving the Lord God as if he were a person’s best and only friend.
- (vii) Loving the Lord God with the same intensity of emotion and dedication that a parent has for his or her only child.
- (viii) Loving the Lord God as one’s beloved (without whom living for a moment appears to be painful and burdensome).
- (ix) Loving to offer one’s own self totally to the Lord God; loving to surrender completely before the Lord’s holy feet.
- (x) Loving to have a desire to get unification with the Lord God, to be completely one with him, to be fully absorbed in him so much so that no distinction exists between the Lord God and his devotee.
- (xi) And, loving to feel the pain of separation from the Lord God. {Usually this is not something one looks forward to, for this is a sort of a curse. But a true devotee would rather weep in the memory of his beloved Lord God than to suffer any other kind of agony related to the world. This eclectic spiritual state is achieved when a devotee is so deeply in love with his Lord God that even a momentary diversion of his mind from the Lord creates a strong pang of anguish in his heart that is equivalent to the grief of separation that overcomes a person when he is separated from his

beloved. When this happens, it can be affirmatively said that this devotee has attained maturity in his Bhakti. }

[The 11 types of devotees of the Lord have been mentioned in this verse by sage Narad. This in a way outlines the eleven forms that devotion takes; they are actually variations of the same virtue of Bhakti because their main objective is the same—to develop devotion and love for the Lord God which lead to spiritual bliss, to liberation of the soul from worldly delusions and miseries, and to attain oneness of the individual's soul with the Supreme Soul of creation so that the cycle of birth and death is terminated for good. They are as follows:—

(i) Devotees who enjoy praising the Gunas and Mahatamya of the Lord—this involves narrating, singing and generally propagating the glories of the Lord and his divine virtues;

(ii) Devotees who enjoy in praising the form or Rupa of the Lord God—this involves remembering the divine form of the Lord and worshipping this form;

(iii) Devotees who enjoy doing worship or Pooja of the Lord God—this involves offering of formal forms of worship to the Lord;

(iv) Devotees who enjoy remembering the Lord God constantly, i.e. in Smaran of the Lord;

(v) Devotees who enjoy being a humble servant of the Lord God and serving him selflessly, i.e. in being a Dasa of the Lord; to become a humble servant of the Lord; to serve the Lord with great simplicity and humility, not expecting anything in return; to be ever eager to do anything which would please the Lord;

(vi) Devotees who enjoy being a friend of the Lord God, a form of devotion that is called Sakhya Bhava—to treat the Lord as one's close friend and companion;

(vii) Devotees who enjoy the splendour and radiance of the Lord God's divinity and holiness, known as Kanta, that they experience within their own self in the form of their Atma which is pure consciousness; who treat their own Atma as a fraction of the Supreme Atma represented by the Lord God;

(viii) Devotees who enjoy the emotion of Vaatsalya—i.e. who love the Lord God as dearly as one loves one's own children;

(ix) Devotees who enjoy Atma-nivedan—i.e. who submit themselves completely to the Lord God; who pray to the Lord internally;

(x) Devotees who have Tammayataa, i.e. who enjoy being submerged in the thoughts of the Lord God so much so that they lose awareness of themselves as well as their surrounding; who remain perpetually engrossed in the thoughts of the Lord and to remain lost in the bliss derived from it;

(xi) And, devotees who enjoy Param-viraha—i.e. who suffer gravely due to separation from the Lord just like a lover remains submerged in grief if his loved one is separated from him.

Narada's eleven ways of Bhakti appear to be a combination in which devotion and love for Lord God can be practiced by a spiritual aspirant. They help a person to achieve spiritual purification and God-realisation in one way or the other.

Now, let us briefly see some examples of devotees who had attended bliss and liberation perfection by following one or the other paths of Bhakti. This list is just for the purpose of illustration, for there are countless other devotees who have also enjoyed bliss of God-realisation. This list is not strictly in order of the ways of Bhakti listed herein above, but gives us an idea of the essence of the theme.

(i) King Parikshit attended salvation by hearing the glories of Lord Krishna. The saintly crow named Kaagbhushund attained eternity and bliss by hearing the divine story of Lord Ram. Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, attained freedom from delusions by hearing the divine glories of Lord Ram from Kaagbhushund. Similarly, sage Sukdeo, the parrot-saint, attained bliss and beatitude by narrating the divine glories of the Lord.

(ii) The four celestial sages known as Sanat Kumars and sage Narad gained perfection by singing the glories of the Lord.

(iii) The devotee named Prahalad realized the Lord by remembering him.

(iv) Laxman and Bharat, the younger brothers of Lord Ram, attained bliss and perfection by serving the Lord.

(v) Hanuman, the legendary monkey devotee of Lord Ram, attained perfection by physical service to the Lord, and by constantly remembering the Lord's holy name.

(vi) King Prithu attained an exalted stature by worshipping the Lord.

(vii) Dhruva and Akrura attained the Lord by offering prayers to him.

(viii) Arjuna became perfect by befriending the Lord.

(ix) King Bali and Vibhishan (the brother of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka) attained fame by offering everything to the Lord.

(x) Manu and Satrupa attained the Lord by loving him as their beloved son Lord Ram in their next birth as king Dasrath and his queen Kaushalya of Ayodhya.

(xi) The citizens of Ayodhya attained the bliss of God-realisation by suffering the pangs of separation from Lord Ram when he was away from them for fourteen years during which period the Lord had eliminated the demons led by their king Ravana of Lanka. Similarly, the Gopis of Vrindavan attained perfection in spiritualism by the pangs of pain they suffered upon separation from Lord Krishna.]

८३ इत्य् एवं वदन्ति जनजल्पनिर्भया एकमताः

कुमारव्यासशुकशाण्डिल्यगर्गविष्णुकौण्डिल्यशेषोद्धवारुणबलिहनुमद्विभीषणादयो भक्त्याचार्याः

83 ity evaṁ vadanti jana-jalpa-nirbhayā eka-matāḥ kumāra-vyāsa-śuka-śāṇḍilya-garga-viṣṇu-kaunḍilya-śeṣoddhavāruṇi-bali-hanūmad-vibhīṣaṇādayo bhakty-ācāryāḥ

(83) Wise, learned, acclaimed and God-realised saints, seers, teachers and practitioners of Bhakti (bhakty-ācāryāḥ) have unanimously affirmed this (i.e. they have unequivocally endorsed what has already been said in the preceding verses) without being afraid of inviting ignominy for their views, or hoping to be praised for it.

[Now, a list of such exalted devotees is given.] These illustrious devotees are the following: Sanat Kumars, Veda Vyas, Shukdeo, Shandilya, Garga, Vishnu, Kaundinya, Sesha, Uddhava, Aaruni, Bali, Hanuman, Vibhishan, etc.

[Sages and seers are not afraid of saying the truth. They are not concerned about the way the world would treat their views—whether it would accept their advice or reject it. These pious and self-realised souls had personally experimented with Bhakti for a lifetime, and they experienced success with it. They concluded that of all other

spiritual paths that have been prescribed in the different scriptures for one's spiritual well-being and attaining eternal bliss and freedom from the torments associated with the cycle of birth and death, this single path known as Bhakti is the best and the easiest one of them. So they thought it wise to share their personal experiences with other devotees so that they too can benefit from it.

They were dispassionate in their teaching; they had no one to appease or provoke. They weren't afraid if the world would receive their advice with scorn and ridicule, or welcome it as a panacea for spiritual ills that overwhelm the creature. They taught the Truth that they themselves had experimented with and experienced success in.

An important point to note here is that just like the fact that 'Truth' is one, constant and universal in nature, the advice given by these teachers regarding Bhakti is also one and the same, without any trace of doubt and without any ambiguity.]

८४ य इदं नारदप्रोक्तं शिवानुशासनं विश्वसिति श्रद्धते स भक्तिमान् भवति स प्रेष्ठं लभते स प्रेष्ठं लभत इति

84 ya idam nārada-proktaṁ śivānuśāsanam viśvasiti śraddhate sa bhaktimān bhavati sa preṣṭham labhate sa preṣṭham labhata iti

(84) Thus ("iti"), he who believes and has faith in these spiritual principles related to Bhakti as expounded by sage Narad and commanded (or decided) by Lord Shiva, is able to attain devotion and love for the Lord God; he is able to attain his beloved (i.e. the Lord God) as well as perfection in his spiritual objectives in life (i.e. attain eternal bliss, beatitude and peace; is able to attain liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation).

Indeed, a practitioner of Bhakti is able to establish himself and attain perfection in his spiritual pursuit by following the principles laid down by sage Narad and Lord Shiva. Indeed he can do so; there is no doubt in it!

[An important point to note here is that the origin of these eclectic spiritual principles related to Bhakti is attributed to Lord Shiva. Sage Narad is merely expounding upon them; he is only 'spreading the good word' that was originally conceived by Lord Shiva for the good of mankind.

Lord Shiva is the most enlightened amongst the pantheon of Gods. It is believed that he is the God who had first conceived the divine story of Lord Ram in his mind, and then enshrined it reverentially in his heart as it bestowed upon him immense spiritual peace and bliss. Lord Shiva remains perpetually immersed in doing meditation and contemplation, in remembering the Lord and his holy name; he is the patron God of ascetics; he practices an exemplary level of renunciation, detachment and dispassion. He is a self-realised Soul par-excellence. Hence, Lord Shiva is the best moral preceptor and the best guide to teach what Bhakti consists of.

Sage Narad is a blessed soul too, for he is not only the mind-born son of the creator Brahma but a beloved devotee of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, who practiced Bhakti every moment of his existence. He is loved by the Lord as Narad always ensures that all the creatures ultimately develop love and devotion for the Lord. Wherever he goes he teaches the path of Bhakti that would help the creature

attain freedom from worldly miseries as well as freedom from the cycle of birth and death. So wherever he goes he is warmly welcomed and shown respect. He is trusted and respected even by the demons who generally detest saints.

Another important point to note is that one must have firmness of faith and belief in this spiritual path, in the advice given by learned teachers, and in the Lord God himself. Doubts and skepticism lead one nowhere. They only create confusion and perplexities. This has already been stressed in verse no. 75.

The last word “iti” means that this discussion is now concluded.]

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Bhakti Sutra Mala

The Devotional Path to God-Realisation

[Roman Transliteration of Text, English Exposition, Elaborate Notes on
Ram Charit Manas; Dohawali; Adhyatma Ramayan;
Tripadvibhut Maharnaryan Upanishad; Krishna's Geeta—canto 12;
Narad Bhakti Sutra & Shandilya Bhakti Sutra]

Chapter 7

'Shandilya Bhakti Sutra'

The book "Shandilya Bhakti Sutra" is a Book of 100 Aphorisms that explains what 'Bhakti', the spiritual philosophy dedicated to devotion and love for Lord God, actually is, and how to attain success in developing this eclectic spiritual virtue. It also points out the finer nuances of Bhakti and deals with this subject from the perspective of the philosophy as expounded in the scriptures such as the Upanishads, the ancient Purans such as the Vishnu Puran, the Geeta of Lord Krishna, and the Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurana. Hence, the 'Shandilya Bhakti Sutra' is an intelligent assessment and analysis of the esoteric spiritual concept of Bhakti that would convince a person of its immense importance and unmatched value as a unique and singularly effective path to God-realisation with its attendant bliss and beatitude.

This book can also be called "Shandilya Bhakti Shatak" as it has 100 verses. ["Shatak" = 100]

The 'Shandilya Bhakti Sutra' is named after sage Shandilya. We come across this name in different scriptural texts, right from the Vedic and the Upanishad period till the period of the epic Mahabharat which coincides with Lord Krishna's Geeta period.

A quick look at these sages as they are mentioned in these ancient scriptures: (a) One sage named Shandilya is mentioned several times in the Shatapath Brahmn (9/4/4/17; 10/1/4/10). He was a great authority on the ritual of the fire sacrifice. He is said to be a disciple of sage Kushri and a teacher of sage Vaatsya. (b) Another Shandilya appears in the Sama Veda tradition's Chandogya Upanishad, 3/14. (c) The name of sage Shandilya is mentioned in the Shukla Yajur Veda's Brihadaranyka Upanishad at three places, i.e. 4/6/1, 4/6/3 and 6/5/4. (d) An Upanishad named 'Shandilya Upanishad' is also attributed to him, and it is the 14th Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition. This Upanishad presents the metaphysical philosophy behind the concept of Yoga and is comparable to Patanjali's Yoga Sutra which essentially deals with the physical aspect of Yoga. (e) One Shandilya is mentioned as a sage in the court of king Yudisthir in the epic Mahabharat, Sabhaaparva, 4/17.

However, sage Shandilya who penned his philosophical thoughts on Bhakti in his book 'Bhakti Sutra' most probably belongs to the post-Krishna's Geeta period as he has cited the philosophy of many scriptures that existed at that time, such as the Geeta itself, the Purans such as the Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuram, the Vishnu Puran, the Nrisingh Puran, the epic Mahabharat, as well as the Upanishads, all of which are referred to by him, either directly or indirectly by inference.

Some such instances where these scriptures have been freely used by sage Shandilya to support his logic and arguments in favour of the supremacy of Bhakti over all other means of God-realisation are the following:

(a) He has directly quoted from Krishna's Geeta in Sutra no. 14 where he refers to the Gopis, Sutra no. 23 where Chapter 12 of Geeta is referred to, and Sutra no. 83 where a direct mention of the Geeta is done (as this Sutra refers to Geeta's verse nos. 6/30, 9/22, 9/34, 11/55, and 12/6).

(b) At numerous other places he has cited the Geeta to support his philosophy, e.g. in Sutra nos. 6, 9, 17, 22, 41, 46, 47, 50, 52, 54, 56, 57, 58, 66, 70, 76, 81, 83, 84).

(c) He has also cited the Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuram (Sutra nos. 14, 52), the Vishnu Puran (Sutra nos. 52, 74, 75), and the Nrisingh Puran (Sutra no. 67).

(d) At other places, he has cited the Upanishads, for example the Chandogya Upanishad (Sutra nos. 3, 11, 31), the Taitteriya Upanishad (Sutra no. 6), the Shwetashwatar Upanishad (Sutra no. 18), the Brahm Sutras (Sutra nos. 30, 91), the Mahabharat (Sutra nos. 53, 79).

The question arises: was the teacher named Shandilya who enunciated the 'Bhakti Sutras' the same as the ones appearing in the scriptural texts as mentioned herein above? Though the physical time frame covered in these scriptures extends over several eras, yet it is quite possible that all these names refer to the same person. It is because some of the ancient sages had mastered and perfected the art and science of controlling their life forces, known as their Prans or their vital winds, so much so that they could live for extended periods of time, much beyond the average lifespan of an ordinary human being. This is expected especially with Shandilya as he was an expert on Yoga, the branch of knowledge that deals, among other things, with the control of the vital winds through different methods. This is clear when we read Shandilya Upanishad cited above.

He was a great and renowned teacher and philosopher par excellence. People from far and wide used to come to the hermitages of such enlightened teachers in those times to gain knowledge. Shandilya used to preach them on various aspects of metaphysical and theological knowledge pertaining to the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Purans. Later on he must have realized that he did not get internal peace inspite of expounding on the scriptures for the better part of his life. He contemplated upon this dilemma to determine the reason why he was not at peace with himself, and came to the conclusion that true peace does not come with mere knowledge, even of the Supreme Lord, but it comes only when the creature develops true love, affection and devotion for the Lord.

He thought over the matter and saw that if this was the case with him then it would also be the case with the countless disciples he had taught, who had graduated from his hermitage and went on to become established teacher in their own right. So he wondered that, after all, what is the use of having a deep knowledge of metaphysics and theology and studying the numerous scriptures, of being an expert in these scriptures and the knowledge they grant, if a person can't obtain that object for which he acquires this knowledge? What is the use of his life as a teacher and advisor if the generations that depend upon his teachings and advices can't actually gain

something worthwhile, if they continue to suffer in the endless cycle of birth and death inspite of having the best person as their teacher? So he should change track from merely preaching about the scriptures and do something about the question concerning peace of the soul.

Upon intense deliberation he concluded that true peace, bliss, beatitude and blessedness of the soul comes only by having devotion and love for the Lord God, for ultimately the teachings of all the scriptures is meant to bring the living being closer to the Supreme Lord, and if this objective is not met then the whole exercise is wasted. All the methods prescribed in the scriptures for this purpose are true, correct and effective, but they are difficult to implement and the chances of failure are higher than that of success. Everyone cannot reach his spiritual goal by pursuing the many methods advised by the scriptures.

So, what was the solution? Being an enlightened teacher, this question perennially disturbed him, especially because others looked up to him for guidance. Upon intense contemplation and delving deep into this matter he determined that the solution lies in ‘Bhakti’—the path of devotion and love for the Lord God. Hence he decided to preach on Bhakti henceforth, and utilize his expertise on the scriptures to prove the supremacy and effectiveness of Bhakti as a far better spiritual pursuit as compared to other methods to attain God-realisation with its attendant eternal peace, blessedness, bliss, beatitude and felicity. Bhakti was the easiest way to find liberation and deliverance from the cycle of miseries and torments associated with this mortal and gross world of transmigration.

This is very clear in the first verse (Sutra) itself of this book, wherein sage Shandilya opens his discussion by saying “Now we shall enquire about Bhakti”. It clearly means that he had been teaching or preaching about other topics, and finally decided to dwell upon Bhakti because whatever he taught or preached was not sufficient in fulfilling his desires to help himself as well as disciples to attain the goal of life, which is to attain eternal internal peace for the soul as well as find liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration. This objective can be fulfilled only by attaining God-realisation, i.e. being able to establish oneness between the individual and the supreme Lord, to merge one’s own ‘self’ known as the pure consciousness with the ‘Supreme Self’ known as Brahm who is the cosmic Consciousness personified.

The meaning and concept of the phrase “Bhakti Sutra” has already been explained in detail in the beginning of Chapter 6 titled ‘Narad Bhakti Sutra’ of this Book. So it is not repeated here.

This Book contains gems of spiritual wisdom and is certain to inspire any person who is seeking spiritual guidance as to how to please his beloved Lord God in the easiest and the best possible way. This path would also lead him to the true goal of human life, which is to attain eternal bliss and beatitude as well as to find liberation and deliverance for the soul from the endless miseries associated with the cycle of birth and death in this mortal, delusory and gross world, which is attained by God-realisation and becoming one with the cosmic Soul.

‘Bhakti Sutra’ fulfils the six basic characteristic qualities for any formula to be excellent and practicable—viz, it is easy to understand and remember as it is clear and unambiguous, it gives complete information on Bhakti, it is succinct, concise and aphoristic, it contains the essence of the matter presented in a beautiful manner, it has a universal application and covers the entire theme by not leaving anything out of its ambit, and it is irrefutable in as much as its veracity and effectiveness cannot be challenged.

Bhakti is a spiritual practice that helps the seeker to establish a direct link with the Supreme Lord in a very easy manner. This path is free from the strenuous efforts needed for other paths such as Yoga (meditation), Dhyan (contemplation), Karma (doing deeds righteously and dispassionately offering all its rewards to the Lord God), Dharma (living a righteous life in accordance with the many principles of right living and right conduct as expounded in the scriptures) etc.

Bhakti is something that is natural and effortless as it basically consists of the virtues of ‘love and devotion’ for the Lord God whom the devotee begins to love and be sincerely devoted to from the core of his heart. This will come automatically once the devotee realises that the Lord whom he loves is the one who is his best friend and companion, who will take care of all his temporal as well as spiritual welfare and needs in a selfless manner like no other Lord or Master would ever do. Bhakti comes spontaneously, and like a spring of nectar sprouting forth from the bowls of the earth, Bhakti would provide eternal blessedness, blissfulness and beatitude to the devotee, it would provide profound solace and succour to his soul in a world full of endless miseries and torments. Not only this, the devotee is assured of emancipation and salvation by the virtue of having Bhakti by his side.

The “Sutras” are so short in their primary form that they seem too difficult to be understood without the help of an explanatory commentary in an easy language which would bring out the profound spiritual truths that they refer to. Hence, many learned souls have tried their best to explain them in the way they had interpreted them. Obviously this gives way to variations in the way the Sutras are explained by different people because each person has his own unique style of writing and explaining things in the way he has understood it.

A student of ‘Bhakti’ will be best advised to read all the books that deal with this spiritual theme. However, for readers of ‘Shandilya Bhakti Sutra’, of special interest would be another book with a similar title but expounded by another great sage: it is called ‘Narad Bhakti Sutra’ which was expounded by the celestial sage Narad. The reading of these two books along with other spiritual books cited in our present compilation titled ‘Bhakti Sutra Mala’ would help a student of Bhakti get a comprehensive knowledge of this grand spiritual subject.

One salient point to note with respect to ‘Narad Bhakti Sutra’ and ‘Shandilya Bhakti Sutra’ is that though they both have dealt with the theme of Bhakti in a systematic manner but they differ in their approach to it—for whereas Narad has dealt with Bhakti at an emotional level linked to the heart, sage Shandilya has tackled Bhakti from the intellectual and philosophical level. This is expected—because whereas Narad was a devotee par-excellence of Lord Vishnu who had chosen the easy to follow and practical path of pure love and devotion for the Lord as the only means of attaining beatitude and bliss as well as liberation and deliverance from the world of transmigration, sage Shandilya was more contemplative and intellectual by nature as he was a learned sage who was more knowledge oriented and wished to first study the different scriptures to understand the philosophy and the logic behind the supremacy of Bhakti over other spiritual paths to God-realisation as expounded in these ancient scriptures before actually accepting it. So naturally therefore, his exposition on Bhakti is based on logical reasoning and citing of instances from the scriptures to prove and establish the effectiveness of Bhakti as a spiritual path leading to attainment of bliss, beatitude and oneness with the Lord God.

Hence, whereas Narad’s prescription of Bhakti are simple to understand and would appeal to a person who is driven by the emotions of his heart, sage Shandilya

exposition on Bhakti would attract those who need an intellectual basis to be convinced of anything, and these Sutras need a bit of explanation as well as they are too abstract to be comprehended easily.

One crucial point is to be noted here. If a wise person wishes to reach a goal in life, he will first research on the goal itself, then on the various options available to him to fulfill his desire, and finally decide for himself which path is best for him. Once he is convinced that a particular path or mean is the best way he can use to reach his desired goal in life, he will then be able to follow the selected path faithfully, free from distractions arising out of confusions and doubts; he will follow the path with zeal and commitment. This will ensure his success. On the other hand, if he merely goes on a path because someone has said it is good, then the chances of falling on the way and getting fidgety and confused are pretty high.

To wit, in the realm of spiritualism, this method also applies to a devotee who wishes to reach his Lord God and attain eternal bliss and beatitude. A wise devotee is one who first convinces himself in no uncertain terms that Bhakti is the best way to attain his God. The Shandilya Bhakti Sutra would help in this basic step of convincing him of the supremacy of Bhakti over all other paths of God-realisation in a logical way by citing the proof and the authority of the scriptures to establish the reputation of Bhakti as the supreme path to God.

Once convinced and determined that he would follow Bhakti to realize his spiritual goal, the devotee can now rely on sage Narad's advice given in the Narad Bhakti Sutra as a practical guide to move ahead.

That is why sage Shandilya is very particular in giving proofs (known as Pramaan) of what he proposes because he wants to be logical and likes to present his concepts in a rationale way by eliminating arguments and doubts that contradict the basic truth he is putting forth in the Sutras. Narad, on the other hand, is not interested in any intellectual discussions but goes straight to the practical aspects of Bhakti, so his approach is to the point and straightforward as it is based on his personal practical experiences regarding Bhakti.

A spiritual aspirant would really benefit if he studies both the Sutras of Shandilya and Narad to reach his goal of God-realisation.

One distinguishing feature of 'Shandilya Bhakti Sutra' is that it freely draws from the philosophy of the Upanishads and other scriptures to establish the fundamental principles that govern Bhakti, the spiritual path of devotion and love for the Lord God that leads to God-realisation with its attendant bliss and beatitude as well as final liberation from the cycle of transmigration which traps an ordinary soul. This is naturally expected because sage Shandilya was a great exponent of the Upanishads. He has liberally utilized his deep understanding of metaphysics and theology as enunciated in the Upanishads, and has used this knowledge to establish the supremacy of Bhakti over all other spiritual paths. During his discourse he cautions us that the object of this Bhakti is only one Lord, and he is the Supreme Being whom the Upanishads call Brahm, the personified form of the cosmic Consciousness, and that the realization of this Brahm is the real aim of Gyan, spiritual wisdom and enlightenment. Bhakti aims to bring about a union between an individual's 'self', i.e. his Atma, with this supreme Brahm who is the Supreme Atma or the Parmatma, also known as the Lord God of creation.

Now let us examine the basic formula employed by sage Shandilya in Bhakti Sutra. The Sutras can be classified under the following four headings—(a) The "Pramaans" or the proof of any given knowledge, here that knowledge is concerned with Bhakti; (b) The "Prameya" or the object that is to be known through these proofs,

and the object here is the Supreme Lord that is the ultimate object of Bhakti; (c) The “Saadhans” or the practical way or mean to be adopted to attain that object and fulfill one’s objective, which here is attainment of God-realisation; and (d) “Mukti” or final liberation and deliverance from the mundane existence for those aspirants who have followed the prescribed spiritual path of Bhakti diligently; it is synonymous with being one with the Supreme Being, the Lord God of the world; it is also synonymous with the merger of the individual’s Atma or soul with the cosmic Atma or the Supreme Soul of creation.

The “Pramaans” are of three kinds—(i) one that is actually witnessed by the sense organs of perception such as the eye which sees it, ears which hear it, skin which touches it, tongue which tastes it, and nose which smells it; (ii) one that is imagined by applying the mind and logic, and it is based on inference; and (iii) one that is based on the words of the scriptures which are authentic in their nature. Out of these three, the proof based on the scriptures is the best as they always speak about the Universal Truth.

The “Prameya”, the object sought through this knowledge and proof, is also three—viz. (i) God or the Supreme Being, also known as Brahm in the Upanishads; (ii) The Jiva or the living being; and (iii) The physical world, both the animate and the inanimate. Out of these three, the knowledge of Brahm is the best because he represents the cosmic Consciousness that is eternal and the only spiritual truth in this creation. The other two entities, i.e. the Jiva and the world, are manifestations of Brahm, hence subsidiary to the Supreme Being.

The “Saadhan” are the means by which one can attain his selected objective, which here is to attain God-realisation. These Saadhans, are many and varied. Some of them are like Yoga (meditation), Dhyana (contemplation), Tapa (austerity and penances), Yajna (religious sacrifices), and so on and so forth. But the best means is called Bhakti, or having devotion for the Lord God. Shandilya proves it by citing the philosophy of the different scriptures.

The “Mukti” is the ultimate aim of all spiritual practices. It is to attain liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death; it is to attain emancipation and salvation for the soul. Gyan or knowledge, Karma or doing deeds, and Bhakti or devotion are the three main ways by which this Mukti can be achieved. Out of these three paths (“Saadhanas”) Bhakti is said to be the easiest and the best as it is loved by the Lord (the “Prameya”) himself. And what is the proof (“Pramaan”) of it? Spontaneous attainment of an extreme level of ecstasy, bliss and joy is the proof of the effectiveness of Bhakti vis-à-vis other methods. Shandilya gives signs that would indicate that a spiritual aspirant has attained maturity in Bhakti (verse no. 44).

Sage Shandilya has graded ‘Bhakti’ into two categories (and so has sage Narad). One is called ‘Paraa Bhakti’ which is the supreme form of Bhakti; it is the primary form of Bhakti. The other is called ‘Gauna Bhakti’ which is secondary kind of Bhakti; or it is subsidiary to the primary Bhakti. We shall read about them in the text. The Paraa Bhakti is primarily related to the inner-self and is directly concerned with the heart and the soul which are intensely and sincerely in love with the Lord God so much so that one loses awareness of one’s self as well as of his surrounding, while the Gauna Bhakti is an external form of devotion that relies on doing of deeds such as offering of worship, chanting the Lord’s holy name, singing the glories of the Lord, doing Yoga (meditative exercises), participating in community religious services as making charities, doing sacrifices, fasting, keeping of vows etc.

Both these two types of Bhaktis lead to God-realisation, but while Paraa Bhakti or the supreme form of devotion for the Lord God establishes oneness with

God immediately as it is a self-kindled fire that springs up spontaneously, the Gauna Bhakti takes a long time to mature as it is step-by-step method that one takes to start the same fire.

Further, the ‘Paraa Bhakti’, the primary and the principle kind of Bhakti, the best form of Bhakti, is to have true, undiluted and selfless form of love, affection and devotion for the Lord God. The ‘Gaun Bhakti’, the secondary or the subsidiary form of Bhakti, are the various ways that a devotee adopts to attain the Lord God; they aid a person to obtain success in Bhakti.

Bhakti has also been classified into three different categories as follows: ‘Gyan Bhakti’ (one develops devotion for the Supreme Being when he becomes wise and enlightened, when he understands the Truth and the truthful path to God-realisation—verse nos. 2-11), ‘Yoga Bhakti’ (using meditation and contemplation as a tool for devotion and God-realisation—verse no. 19), and ‘Gaun Bhakti’ (devotion for the Lord God that is obtained in a subtle manner by practicing different spiritual paths—verse nos. 20-71). This last, i.e. the Gaun Bhakti, has been further classified into three categories (verse no. 72)—viz. ‘Aarta Bhakti’ (when one is extremely distressed he takes refuge with the Lord God in order to overcome his sufferings and adverse circumstances), ‘Jigyasaa Bhakti’ (when one has heard about the Lord and wishes to explore more about him and to know what the spiritual rewards of Bhakti are, and so he follows this path more with an intention to examine it than for the sake of love for Lord God), ‘Artharthi Bhakti’ (when one expects any worldly reward from doing Bhakti and offering worship to the Lord).

The wonderful thing about sage Shandilya’s Bhakti Sutra is that it clearly states that every human being has an equal right to attain the Supreme Being through the path of Bhakti, irrespective of his caste, birth and race—verse no. 78.

Since the Bhakti Sutras of Shandilya are quite esoteric in nature, they need to be told and explained in a simple and day-to-day language so that even a common man can easily understand them. That is why I have adopted a “minimalist approach” in my own book—that is to say, I have explained the meaning of the verses in simple terms with the main emphasis on bringing out their intent and purpose, and have also given references to other scriptural texts when they are referred to in a particular verse, but have desisted from either delving too much and too deeply into each verse or quoting the cited references from the scriptures in detail so that brevity and simplicity in my narration can be maintained.

We shall observe during our reading of this excellent work on the spiritual theme of Bhakti that sage Shandilya has covered all its important aspects as he takes a broad sweep at it. For instance, we read about Saguna Bhakti as well as Nirguna Bhakti—i.e. devotion for the formless, invisible and cosmic form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm as well as the Lord’s manifested that has a name and the details of which is easily understood and well documented, such as Lord Krishna or Lord Vasudeo and Lord Ram (verse nos. 27-28, and 46-48 respectively).

Then we read about the different ways the Supreme Being is attained by Bhakti depending upon the spiritual evolvment and the level of enlightenment of the aspirant, i.e. about Brahm-realisation (verse nos. 28-29), about self-realisation (verse no. 30), and about God-realisation (verse nos. 46-49).

There are many ways by which Bhakti can be practiced successfully. For instance, there is the path of Prem (undiluted love for the Lord God—verse nos. 2 and 83); Gyan (acquisition of knowledge that leads to development of devotion for the Lord God—verse nos. 16-17, 26-27); Yoga (which teaches how to bring about a union between the individual soul with the supreme Soul—verse no. 32); proper

application of the mind, wisdom and enlightenment that helps removal of delusions and confusions (verse nos. 33-42); Bhajan (worshipping the Lord God at a personal level—verse nos. 56, 76); Kirtan (singing the Lord’s glories aloud in a group—verse nos. 57, 76); many other forms of worship such as Sacrifices (verse no. 66); Daan (charity—verse nos. 68, 70); Dhyān (contemplation and remembrance of the Lord God and his glories—verse no. 65), Japa (repetition of the Lord’s holy name—verse no. 61), Karma (doing righteous deeds and offering everything to the Lord God—verse nos. 64, 71), formal services such as offerings of oblations and libations that are made to the Lord God (verse nos. 67-68, 70), even the humblest form of offering such as a mere leaf or a flower that is offered to the Lord God with due love and devotion (verse no. 70), and so on and so forth.

The signs of success in Bhakti as exemplified by the characters exhibited by acclaimed devotees of the Lord God have also been outlined in brief (verse nos. 43-44). It is also acknowledged that some inadvertent errors may be made by a person in the path of Bhakti, but then he need not lose hope as he is advised to neutralize their negative affects by taking remedial steps (verse nos. 69, 74-75).

Canto 1/ Part 1

॥ शाण्डिल्य भक्ति सूत्रम् ॥

प्रथमोऽध्यायः

प्रथममाह्निकम्

|| śāṇḍilya bhakti sūtram ||

prathamō 'dhyāyaḥ

prathamamāhnikam

१ / १ / १ अथातो भक्तिजिज्ञासा ॥ १ ॥

1/ 1 / 1 athātō bhaktijijñāsā || 1||

(1/1/1) Now we shall discuss (contemplate and deliberate upon; to enquire) about the doctrine (the principles or the philosophy) of ‘Bhakti’. [Or, ‘now let us examine and analyse in detail what Bhakti actually consists of’.] (1)

[‘Bhakti’ means to have devotion and love for the Lord God. So sage Shandilya says that now he shall discuss about this subject in detail.

Shandilya says that he wants to ‘inquire’ into Bhakti; he wants to analyse it and determine why and how it is the best and the supreme path to God-realisation. He wants to do it to remove all doubts and confusions about Bhakti.

The opening words of this verse clearly indicate that sage Shandilya had been expounding upon other philosophical and metaphysical topics and discussing the numerous scriptures before he finally decided to dwell upon the subject of Bhakti. He was an illustrious and enlightened sage, one who was well-versed in all the scriptural texts such as the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Purans. He had been preaching on them for a lifetime, but unfortunately he did not find the sort of deep internal peace and bliss that this knowledge is supposed to grant to a person.

Contemplating upon the matter and wondering how to get internal peace and bliss for the soul he concluded that though it is true that the knowledge of the scriptures is necessary for one’s wisdom and enlightenment, but that true peace and beatitude does not come merely with this knowledge. The true purpose of all the scriptures is to show the creature the path to God-realisation, to advise him how to find liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration with its attendant chain of miseries and torments, to guide him so that he can find true peace, bliss and happiness in life. But if this aim is not easily achieved, then the entire exercise would fail.

Shandilya discovered that except for a few spiritual aspirants and seekers of God, the majority failed to reach their spiritual goal by trying to follow the various paths advised in the scriptures. So therefore he decided to teach his disciples the path of ‘Bhakti’, i.e. the path of undiluted love, affection and devotion for the Lord God as a means to attain one’s spiritual objectives very easily and without any hassles associated with the other paths.

Being a learned sage he also knew that in the final analysis it was ‘Bhakti’ that would grant his soul an eternal sense of peace and bliss and contentedness. This is because while all other topics are related to the mind, Bhakti is directly related to the heart where the soul resides. Besides this, Bhakti is also very dear to the Lord God, and being in touch with Bhakti is like being in direct touch with the Lord himself. Since the Lord God is an embodiment of eternal bliss and beatitude, and since Bhakti is directly related to the Lord, therefore it follows that a person who adopts Bhakti as a means to reach God has accessed a pitcher of endless spiritual peace, joy and bliss for himself.

So therefore, the illustrious sage Shandilya, who had thoroughly dealt with all the branches of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Purans etc., who was a repository of all secular knowledge and spiritual wisdom, after having expounded upon and discussing all the other branches of the scriptures, had finally turned his attention to the doctrine of Bhakti because he could not find anything anywhere that was more suitable for the attainment of his desired goal of having eternal bliss and beatitude for his soul, of finding eternal peace and rest for his soul by being one with the supreme Soul known as the Parmatma, than the path of Bhakti.

This conclusion is very clear in this verse (Sutra) itself when sage Shandilya opens his discussion by saying “Now we shall enquire about Bhakti”. It clearly means that he had been teaching or preaching about other topics, and finally decided to dwell upon Bhakti because whatever he taught or preached was not sufficient in fulfilling his desires to help himself as well as disciples to attain the goal of life, which is to attain eternal internal peace for the soul as well as find liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration. This objective can be fulfilled only by attaining God-realisation, i.e. being able to establish oneness between the individual and the

supreme Lord, to merge one's own 'self' known as the pure consciousness with the 'Supreme Self' known as Brahm who is the cosmic Consciousness personified.]

१ / १ / २ सा पराऽनुरक्तिरीश्वरे ॥ २ ॥

1 / 1 / 2 s̄a parā'nuraktirīśvarē || 2||

(1/1/2) That (i.e. Bhakti) is to have supreme, true, undiluted and untainted love and attachment (parā 'nurakti) for the Supreme Being, the Lord God of creation (rīśvarē). (2)

[To have true, undiluted and untainted love and devotion for the Lord God is the 'primary' form of Bhakti. All other forms by which Bhakti is practiced, and about which we shall read in due course in this book, are 'secondary' types of Bhakti; they are subsidiaries to Bhakti. This is because they aid in fulfilment of Bhakti; their aim is to give the devotee success in his Bhakti for the Lord God.

To wit, having love, affection and devotion for the Lord God is the 'primary' or the 'principal' way Bhakti is practiced, while all other ways are 'secondary' or 'subsidiary' in nature.

Why is love the primary form of Bhakti? It is because it is favoured by the Lord God himself; it is because it creates an unbreakable bond between the devotee and his Lord; it is because all other things become secondary and inconsequential once love and devotion for the Lord God takes a firm root in the heart and the mind of the devotee. When this actually happens, nothing in the world would ever distract him from his goal of attaining his beloved Lord; nothing would come in the way of his determination to attain oneness with his object of adoration, i.e. to become one with the Lord, or attaining 'God-realisation'. Bliss, beatitude, eternity, liberation, deliverance, emancipation, salvation etc.—all become irrelevant to a devotee and he is not worried about them at all. They come to him without asking.

The importance of 'love' for the Lord God as the paramount requirement of Bhakti has been endorsed in verse no. 83 also.

This form of Bhakti is called 'Parāa Bhakti', the best form of devotion for the Lord God, or the primary form of Bhakti. There are many ways one can express his devotion for the Lord God, such as offering of worship to the Lord, praying to him, reciting his holy name, singing his glories, reading scriptures related to him, etc. But if one does not love the Lord God, if one does not have affection for him, then he cannot be said to have reached maturity in his devotion for the Lord.

One thing is to be kept in mind here. The 'love and longing and attachment' that are being endorsed in this verse relate to the Supreme Lord, and not to the world and anything related to it. That is why this kind of love is called "Parāa"—'supreme'.

This 'attachment' for the Lord is different from the attachment that one has for the world and its material objects, for while attachment with the Lord leads to final liberation and deliverance from this world, attachment with the world leads to further entanglement with it.

It is observed in the world that a person derives immense pleasure when he thinks of an object to which he is emotionally attached and which he intensely loves. That is why emphasis is given on having 'love and attachment' to God in the realm of Bhakti. Since the main objective of Bhakti is to establish oneness between the devotee

and the Lord God, this sort of undiluted and untainted 'love and attachment' is of paramount importance because it helps in bringing this oneness to fruition.

When one truly loves the Lord God and develops an intense affection for him, then all other things become irrelevant. Remembering the Lord and remaining lost in his thoughts, which would be equivalent to doing meditation and contemplation on the Lord, at all times of life would be a natural thing when a person begins to love him. This is observed even in the secular world when a lover appears to be lost in the memory of his beloved if the love between the two is true and intense.

When this eclectic and spiritually evolved stage is reached, then no other formalities are needed between the devotee and the Lord. To wit, the development of love and affection for the Lord God in the heart of his devotee is the ultimate aim of Bhakti, because this establishes an inviolable relationship between the devotee and the Lord God; it's a bond that cannot be broken. This love for the Lord is equivalent to creating oneness between the devotee and his Lord God—which is also the aim of other spiritual practices.

Bhakti, with its special emphasis on love, is a spontaneous emotion sprouting from the deep recesses of the heart of the devotee that makes him long for his beloved Lord God and be attached to him like no other spiritual practice would ever do.

The importance of love for the Lord God is stressed in the Vishnu Puran, 1/20/18, where Prahalad, one of the greatest devotees of Lord Vishnu, says: "Let a steady flow of love for the Lord not cease from my heart in any of the births that I may have to take."

Similarly, in Vishnu Puran, 1/20/19, he says: "Oh Lord! Let a steady flow of love for you not cease from my heart in the same way as attachment for the world and worldly things do not cease from the heart of ordinary mortals."

In Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 11/14/21, the Lord declares: "I, who am the beloved Self of a holy soul, can be captivated only through Bhakti. Devotion to me absolves even the lowly person of the stigma that is attached to his low birth".

In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 10/9-10, Lord Krishna says: "My devotee who knows me as his only object of adoration and love, who is attached to me with a single-minded devotion and faith, who has his mind and senses focused on me, who is completely absorbed in me, is able to purify his heart and enliven his inner self by nurturing my thoughts and remembering my divine glories, my holy name, my forms etc. at all times. To wit, he lives for me, he breathes for me, he eats and drinks for me, and he lives in me to the extent that without me he would have no independent existence. Verily indeed, he lives solely for my sake; his life is to serve me and give pleasure to me. For him even a moment's separation from me is unbearable. He carries on with his worldly duties and responsibilities, but only because these activities please me, and not because any of his own interests are served by them. I alone am enshrined in such a devotee's glorious heart (i.e. there is no other God whom he worships and loves except me). To wit, I am a darling of this devotee (and by extension, he is a darling of mine). To him who has devotion for me in the aforesaid manner, I eliminate the darkness and the gloom of delusions and ignorance from his heart, and at the same time I am responsible to lighten his path leading to the final liberation and deliverance that grants eternal bliss and beatitude."

The love of God is an infinite and absolute feeling of spiritual ecstasy and joy which grants immense bliss and beatitude to the blessed devotee. It is something to be experienced personally, and not something that can be explained to others by the use of words. 'Bhakti' therefore is longing for the Lord God that is so intense and deep down in the heart of the devotee that he thinks of nothing else but the Lord. Bhakti is

a unique feeling that overcomes all other emotions; it is a desire for love of God that negates all other desires. It fills the heart of the blessed devotee with extreme ecstasy and profound bliss like it was a pitcher overflowing with pristine pure and freshly produced nectar.

[A person who has once experienced love for God would never think of anything else.]

१ / १ / ३ तत्संस्थस्यामृतत्वोपदेशात् ॥ ३ ॥

1 / 1 / 3 tatsaṁsthasyāmṛtatvōpadēśāt || 3||

(1/1/3) It is because he who has established himself in ‘it’ (i.e. who has established his own ‘self’ in the supreme ‘Self’ known as Ishwar or Brahm, the Supreme Lord, by being one with him; he who has attained God-realisation by following the path of Bhakti) is deemed to have found the eternal nectar of immortality and bliss unbound. Verily indeed, this is the universal and unequivocal declaration of the scriptures. (3)

[The first word ‘it’ establishes a link between what is being said in this verse with the previous verse no. 1/1/1 and what is said in it.

In the previous verse we have read that having love and attachment for Lord God is the best form of Bhakti or devotion for the Lord. Now this verse tells us the reward of having such love and attachment for the Lord God. What is this reward? It is the symbolic pitcher of nectar of immortality, beatitude and eternal bliss that a devotee gets for his Bhakti for the Lord.

To wit, if a person develops truly intense love for Lord God, then he is able to experience ecstasy and bliss that has no parallel.

This idea is also expressed in the Chandogya Upanishad, 2/3/2 wherein it is essentially said that: “A person who develops devotion for Brahm is able to attain immortality.”

In the Chandogya Upanishad, 2/23/1 it is said that all other rites and rituals may lead a person to their respective results, but it is devotion to the Supreme Lord alone that would help him to attain immortality.

It is said in the Katha Upanishad, 2/3/17-18 that: “By having undiluted and purest form of devotion for the Lord God, one is able to transcend the mundane world of mortal existence, and attain eternal bliss and final beatitude.

Sage Shandilya says: Some may say that for developing Bhakti or devotion for the Lord God, philosophical knowledge known as Gyan is indispensable. To wit, without metaphysical and theological knowledge of the Supreme Being, it is not possible to develop devotion and love for him. But it is an erroneous proposition. Because an atheist may have studied the scriptures and therefore has all the theoretical knowledge required about Brahm or the Supreme Being, but he will not have a trace of love and devotion for the Lord either in his heart, nor will his mind ever believe in the universal and irrefutable existence of the Lord. So therefore, merely having ‘knowledge’ does not mean that one would have ‘love and devotion’ for the Lord God.

Again, though a person who has studied the scriptures may have access to all the metaphysical and theological knowledge they contain, but he never has eternal

bliss and a tremendous feeling of beatitude and blessedness that a devotee experiences.

Hence, sage Shandilya says that it is crucial for a wise person to learn what Bhakti consists of; he says that it is the primary reason for his teaching of the Sutras on Bhakti.]

१ / १ / ४ ज्ञानमिति चेन्न दिवषतोऽपि ज्ञानस्य तदसंस्थितेः ॥ ४ ॥

1 / 1 / 4 jñānamiti cēna divṣatō 'pi jñānasya tadasaṁsthitēḥ || 4||

(1/1/4) Now, to be firmly established in the supreme Brahm is made possible only by attainment of wisdom and enlightenment about the 'self' (because the 'self' of a devotee is pure consciousness known also as the Atma, and Brahm is also the same consciousness known as the Parmatma operating at the universal level of existence).

So therefore, does it mean that Gyan (knowledge; gnosis) is equivalent to Bhakti (devotion)? Is it correct to say that Bhakti is another aspect of Gyan? [This doubt arises because both Gyan and Bhakti help a seeker to be established in the Supreme Being; both help him to attain oneness with the Lord God.]

No, it is not so. For instance, a person may have full 'knowledge' about his enemy, he may know everything worth knowing about the enemy, but this knowledge does not mean that he 'loves' his enemy who is inherently antagonised against him, who hates him. How can a person be affectionately attached with an enemy even if he tried to do so; it's incredulous to even think of it! (4)

[The verse has the word "saṁsthitēḥ"; it means to be firmly established.

In the realm of metaphysics, being Brahm-realised is usually treated to be equivalent to being self-realised. This comes with the supreme knowledge about the truth of the 'self'—that the person's true identity and his true 'self' is not his gross physical body but the Atma, that this Atma is pure consciousness which is the same as the cosmic Consciousness embodied in the form of the Parmatma, the Supreme Lord and God of creation. Hence, there is no distinction between the individual's 'self' and the supreme Self (i.e. the Parmatma or the Lord God) whom the devotee loves and worships.

So it may be argued that the 'Gyan' or the knowledge of the self which leads to self-realisation and makes a wise and enlightened person be firmly established in the Truth that there is no distinction between his 'own self' and the 'supreme Self' known as the Parmatma (Lord God; Brahm) because both are the same universal and cosmic entity known as pure Consciousness, is the same as 'Bhakti' which also aims to establish the same oneness or uniformity between the devotee and his Lord God.

Sage Shandilya refutes this line of argument by giving the example of an enemy. A wise person would gather all information he can lay his hand upon about his enemy, but that does not mean that this knowledge would make him love his enemy. A person is so worried about his enemy that he would always remember him, not this remembrance is not out of love and affection for him. On the contrary, the mere thought of the enemy would make him angry and irritated. So there is no question of a person loving an enemy simply because he remembers him day and night, that his mind and heart are occupied by the thoughts of that enemy, or because he has acquired all possible knowledge that is required of that enemy.

Similarly in the spiritual field, simply having ‘Gyan’ (knowledge) of who the Supreme Being is does not mean that the devotee would develop ‘Bhakti’ (love and devotion) for him. It is obvious, because whereas ‘Gyan’ is an activity of the mind and the intellect which usually works rationally, ‘Bhakti’ is the activity related to the heart with its emotions and sentiments which are usually immune to all other considerations.

The principle expounded in this verse can be understood by another example. In a king’s court there are many ministers and councillors who are extremely wise and experts in their fields. Then there are others who are ordinary in their knowledge but are very faithful to the king and devoted to him; some may even love their king more than their own families. Now in this scenario, though the king would give the wise and skilled members of his court great respect, but at the personal level his heart would be more inclined towards those ministers who are totally devoted to him and would willingly lay down their lives for his sake. The king knows that when bad times fall upon him, or he stares at ruin due to some unfortunate situation, then there are fair chances that his wise ministers may abandon him because they see no future in supporting him any longer, but those who are totally devoted to him would prefer to die but not betray their beloved king.

Similarly, the Lord God prefers to show his grace upon his devotees who love him unconditionally as opposed to those persons who are experts in the knowledge of the scriptures which also teach about the same Lord God. The reason is that the Lord knows that his poor devotees are totally dependant upon him as they have no where else to go to seek solace and succour, while the learned persons have other resources at their disposal by which they can obtain liberation from their miseries.

It is said in the Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇa, 10/14/4, that: “Those who abandon the path of undiluted and untainted love and devotion for the lotus-like holy feet of the Lord God who is the source of true well-being, and instead labour to acquire knowledge that is dry and abstract just for its own sake, such persons toil in vain like those who pound empty husks of paddy in an attempt to extract grain from it.”

In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 12/5, Lord Krishna says: “My devotee alone is on the real path to attain the highest state of blessedness, whereas the path of Gyan is beset with dangers and results in a sorrowful wreck of its adherents.

A similar view has been expressed by Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 45 when he says: “Gyan is a difficult path full of pitfalls, and is also not favoured by me as compared to the path of Bhakti. Hence, wise ones prefer Bhakti over Gyan.”]

१ / १ / ५ तयोपक्षयाच्च ॥ ५॥

1 / 1 / 5 tayōpakṣayācca || 5||

(1/1/5) Besides this (as said in the previous verse no. 1/1/4), it is also observed that with the rise of Bhakti in a person’s heart, Gyan is proportionately reduced (till a time comes when Bhakti is at its zenith best and Gyan is completely eliminated). [This is another reason why Bhakti is superior to Gyan.] (5)

[When one begins to love someone dearly, when this element of love between the lover and the beloved become steady and deep-rooted, then all other matters take a back seat and are rendered irrelevant.

In the realm of spiritualism, when the devotee begins to love and have devotion for his beloved Lord God, then all other spiritual practices become useless and redundant for him. After all, the main purpose of Gyan (knowledge; gnosis) is to make a person become aware of the true purpose of his life and understand the truth concerning his own self as well as the Supreme Lord. Gyan enlightens him about the real goal of his life—which is to find freedom from the cycle of birth and death with its accompanying miseries and torments, to attain emancipation and salvation for his soul, to find liberation and deliverance for himself by merging his own ‘self’ known as the Atma with the supreme Self known as the Parmatma, the Lord God, and thereby find eternal peace, rest, bliss, beatitude and felicity.

A devotee is easily able to attain this spiritual goal by following the path of Bhakti, with the added benefit of getting first-hand help and support from his beloved Lord God who would virtually hand-hold him to success. In the case of Gyan though the goal is the same but the path would be tedious and full of risks, and the seeker would have to make all efforts himself.

The devotee who pursues the path of Bhakti is like an infant in the care of its parent who is very concerned that the child remains safe and happy, while the devotee who pursues the path of Gyan is like an adult who has to take care of himself. This has been expressly made clear by Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-10 that precedes Doha no. 43.

When a devotee can easily attain his beloved Lord God and experience a sense of eternal bliss, peace, joy and blessedness by following the path of Bhakti, then there is no need for him to look elsewhere for this purpose. So he stops pursuing the path of Gyan which would have also made it possible for him to reach this final spiritual goal of his life, but with a lot of difficulties encountered on the way, besides the constant risk of failure—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precedes Doha no. 45.

As it has already been said in verse no. 2 herein above, Bhakti is nothing but undiluted and untainted love and devotion for Lord God that is of the purest kind. It needs no intellectual efforts associated with Gyan, thereby making it accessible even to an ordinary person of an intellect that may not be up to the mark.

Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇ, 7/7/52, says: “Attaining Gyan leading to Brahm-realisation, Godhood and an exalted stature equivalent to that of a wise and enlightened sage or seer, or doing numerous meritorious deeds such as austerity, penance and charity, or acquiring the best of knowledge and wisdom, or observance of sacred vows and sacraments etc.—nothing pleases the Lord like having pure and undiluted devotion for him does.”

In Srimad Bhagvat Geeta, 7/23, Lord Krishna says: “All sorts of offerings (made in the sacred fire and other rituals) go to respective Gods, but (offering made by a devotee in the form of his) devotion comes straight to me.”

Similarly, in Srimad Bhagvat Geeta, 12/7, Lord Krishna says: “I quickly provide deliverance from the ocean of transmigration to him whose mind is fixed on me (i.e. who has deep devotion for me).”

In Vishnu Purāṇ, 1/20/20, 28, the Lord told Prahalad: “Since your mind remains steady in having devotion for me, since you are steadfast in it, surely emancipation and salvation will come to you. And I bless you that your devotion and love for me will never diminish.”

A devotee exults and is ecstatic when he becomes one with his beloved Lord God, and then he exclaims as said in the Shvetashvatara Upanishad, 3/8: “I have realised the transcendental Brahm who shines brilliantly like the sun that is beyond the reach of darkness. Only by realising him one attains freedom from the cycle of birth and death in this mundane life characterised by transmigration. There is absolutely no other way of God-realisation and its attendant blessedness.”

So therefore, when Bhakti dawns on the mental horizon of a person, Gyan loses all its charms and fades away. To wit, as soon as Bhakti appears, Gyan disappears automatically. Hence, Bhakti is preferred by those who are wise and intelligent.]

१ /१ /६ द्वेषप्रतिपक्षभावाद्रसशब्दाच्च रागः ॥ ६॥

1 /1 /6 dvēṣapratipakṣabhāvādrasāśabdācca rāgaḥ || 6||

(1/1/6) Such negative emotions as hatred, antagonism, bitterness, suspicion, opposition and malice are not the characters associated with Bhakti because it is related to sweetness of emotions that provide extreme bliss and eternal joy that are derived by a person when he tastes the sweetness of unadulterated nectar. (6)

[Bhakti is nectar-like in its sweetness and blissfulness. There should be no trace of antagonism, bitterness, suspicion, opposition and ill-will between the devotee and his beloved Lord God. Even from the standpoint of the mundane world it is observed that love between two individuals is sustainable only when they trust each other completely, and there is no iota of bitterness, malice or hate between them. Both individuals derive immense pleasure in each other's company, and this pleasure compares with nothing as far as they are concerned. True love matures when even sitting silently with one's lover gives bliss and happiness to the beloved that would even surpass the joy of drinking nectar.

So is the case with Bhakti. A devotee revels in his Lord God; he derives profound joy and immense bliss by merely remembering the Lord. Bhakti sprouts only in a heart that has been thoroughly cleansed of the negativities mentioned herein above. Both can't coexist.

This fact has been endorsed in Taittiriya Upanishad, 2/7, which says: “The fortunate ones are able to taste the bliss of Brahm-realisation as well as of self-realisation which is far sweeter than any other taste”.

The Taittiriya Upanishad, 11/7, says: “Supreme Brahm is an embodiment of ecstasy and bliss. If one devotes himself to him (i.e. if one thinks of nothing but Brahm), one is able to enjoy the taste of this nectar (of ecstasy and bliss).”

In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 2/59, Lord Krishna says: “Those who have attained stability of the mind turn away from enjoyment of the sense objects of this world; they find no enjoyment in their taste if they have tasted the bliss of Brahm-realisation.”

In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 16/18-20, Lord Krishna says: “Those who are ignorant are not only filled with negative qualities such as egoism, arrogance, haughtiness, lust, anger and malice for everyone, but they hate me too (for no rhyme or reason in spite of the fact that I am their best friend and well-wisher, and I live in their own body as their true ‘self’). I send such malicious fools to take an ignominious birth (literally go to a demonic womb) in the world of transmigration. Birth after birth

they keep sinking down in the vast ocean of transmigration (because they are incompetent to attain me and find deliverance for themselves, for these stupid fools don't know that their salvation lies in having devotion for me)."

Bhakti is in the form of deep love and attachment for Lord God who is the beloved of the devotee. This love is similar to the love that the Gopis (the milkmaids and other female householders of Vrindavan) had for Lord Krishna. Refer: Narad Bhakti Sutra, verse nos. 21-23.

Earlier, verse no. 1/1/2 has already said that Bhakti takes the form of 'deep attachment for the Lord God'. Now, this 'attachment' for the Lord is different from the attachment that one has for the world and its material objects, for while attachment with the Lord leads to final liberation and deliverance from this world, attachment with the world leads to further entanglement with it.

Sage Shandilya's ideal of true Bhakti is that the individual's soul should be fully saturated with love, affection and attachment for the Lord God, for otherwise he will not get his due share of bliss and ecstasy even if he has attained self-realisation by way of having Gyan (gnosis; metaphysical and theological knowledge). To wit, the path to God is Bhakti and not Gyan.]

१/१/७ न क्रिया कृत्यनपेक्षणाज्ज्ञानवत् ॥ ७ ॥

1 /1 /7 na kriyā kṛtyanapēkṣaṇājñānavat || 7||

(1/1/7) Bhakti is not dependent upon any action to fructify or become effective (na kriyā) as is the case with Gyan which requires diligent efforts in order to mature and bear fruits (to yield the desired result). (7)

[Since Gyan is an intellectual activity requiring an active participation of the mind and the intellect with their different components, it would need concerted effort to bear fruit. For instance, one would be required to study the scriptures thoroughly, practice their various doctrines and test their efficacy, be able to focus the mind on the work at hand, be contemplative and analytic in approach, be able to maintain balance of the mind in the face of constant distraction from the external world, be consciously able to renounce all temptations arising from the sense objects of this world, and so on and so forth.

Even practicing the many spiritual paths to liberation and deliverance as advised in the scriptures need effort—such as doing meditation, penances, austerities, sacrifices, keeping of vows, charities, self-control over the sense organs, renunciation of the world etc. Without diligent and concerted efforts, success eludes the spiritual aspirant.

But this is not the case with Bhakti. It is because Bhakti relates to the emotions of love, affection and attachment with the Lord Gods that originate in the heart of the devotee, and are natural and effortless by their very nature. No one has to make an effort to love someone. We say 'I have fallen in love with such and such person'. Now, the word "fallen" itself indicates that no effort is involved, because effort is made to go uphill and not while falling down from a cliff. It does not mean that Bhakti is the downfall of the soul; not at all. This phrase is cited just to show how no effort is needed 'to be in love with anybody', for it is a spontaneous emotion that sprouts on its own accord. No one has to make an effort to love someone even though effort has to be made to reach the place where the beloved lives. Remember: we are

dealing with love for the Supreme Being, hence misinterpretation of the phrase “to fall in love” is absolutely not called for here.

In the case of Bhakti which entails having undiluted and untainted love and affection for the Lord God, the unique situation is that there is no need to go anywhere to find the Lord who is the object of this love. So while initiating the process of Bhakti the devotee does not have to make any kind of ‘effort’ as it purely consists of having love and affection that have a spontaneous origin in his heart, even attainment of the object of his love, i.e. the Lord God, needs no effort on his part because the Lord is present everywhere as he is omnipresent and all-pervading, even residing within the devotee’s own heart so that he need not go anywhere to search for his beloved Lord. Refer verse nos. 82 and 85 also in this context.

So we conclude that no physical effort is needed in Bhakti from its beginning till its fruition. It is an effortless exercise as opposed to Gyan which is based on efforts, and its success also depends of the ability to make efforts properly.

This fact is endorsed by Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 46 where he says: “Say, what effort is needed for success in Bhakti, for it does not depend on any kind of exercises which are necessary for other spiritual practices such as meditation, contemplation, fire sacrifices, austerities, penances, keeping of vows etc. To wit, Bhakti is indeed an effortless path to God-realisation.”

In the same breath, Lord Ram says in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 45: “Gyan is a very difficult proposition. It has difficult requirements, and the mind finds it difficult to remain focused on this path. Only a few can obtain success in it even after enduring the greatest of difficulties. To wit, the path of Gyan is full of hassles and pitfalls.”

Like the flame of the lamp which not only illuminates its own self but also its surrounding effortlessly, Bhakti fills the devotee’s inner self with bliss and ecstasy along with spreading this joy seamlessly and effortlessly to others who come in contact with him.

Why does ‘Bhakti’ need no effort while ‘Gyan’ needs it? It is because Bhakti is of the form of selfless love that does not have any desire for results, hence a devotee need not strive to attain success in Bhakti because if it this Bhakti is true in him success in the form of God-realisation with its attendant bliss and beatitude will come to him automatically. On the other hand, Gyan expects results; there are benchmarks for progress in the path of Gyan and set objectives that are to be achieved. So the aspirant is always on his toes to be vigilant in the path of Gyan, as even a slight carelessness on his part would undermine his success, even neutralising all previous successes, and lead to his ultimate downfall and ruin.]

१ /१ /८ अत एव फलानन्त्यम् ॥ ८॥

1 /1 /8 ata ēva phalānantyam || 8||

(1/1/8) This is why the spiritual rewards of Bhakti are profound and infinite. (8)

[The discussion in the previous verses has established the supremacy of Bhakti over all other spiritual practices that lead to God-realisation. Since Bhakti provides eternity and beatitude to the soul, since it brings about oneness between the soul of the devotee and supreme Soul represented by the Lord God whom the devotee loves,

Bhakti leads to final liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation of its practitioners. So its effects and results are beyond measure.

All other meritorious deeds and actions provide heaven and its pleasures and comforts to the creature, but in due course of time when these good effects of his good deeds wear out the creature has to return to this world to do more deeds and take more actions to re-achieve that heavenly pleasure and comfort that he had been enjoying earlier. This is clearly mentioned in the Chandogya Upanishad, 8/1/6 which says: “Meritorious deeds and actions helps the creature to gain sovereignty of this world, but when their good effects end so does this sovereignty. Similarly, good deeds give the creature sovereignty of the heaven, but when these good effects wear off the sovereignty too ends.”

This is why it is said in the Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 6/11/52 that “A devotee who has tasted the blissful nectar of Bhakti for the Lord does not crave or covets anything else. So he says—‘Oh Lord, I do not want the upper heaven known as the Brahma-Loka, nor do I want to go to the heaven known as the Indra-Loka where other Gods live, or the sovereignty of the upper worlds nor of the lower worlds, and I do not want success in the different forms of Yoga as well, and neither do I want salvation. I want nothing but love and devotion for your holy lotus-like feet.’ ” Surely this declaration clearly indicates that a person who known the pleasure that comes by tasting the nectar of bliss, joy, beatitude and felicity that comes with Bhakti would not like any other kind of pleasure. To wit, Bhakti has unique rewards.

Similarly, it is said in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 10/16/1/37 that: “Those who have found for themselves the pollen of bliss represented by the Lord’s holy lotus-like feet would neither covet the realm of Brahma, nor the sovereignty of the whole earth, nor the dominion over the nether worlds, nor acquisition of mystical powers that are obtainable by Yoga, and not even liberation and deliverance that is the aim of enlightened and self-realised ascetics. They want nothing but pure love for the Lord and service of his holy feet.”

An exactly identical idea is expressed by sage Sutikshan when he met Lord Ram. He told the Lord: “Oh Lord! I have only one wish, and it is that you reside in my heart eternally as if it was your own dwelling place. I wish that I feel proud that I am a humble servant of the Lord, and he is my Lord and Master!” Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 20-21 that precede Doha no. 11.

When king Manu and his wife Satarupa did Tapa (penance) to have a divine vision of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, the Lord revealed himself before them and asked them to request him for any boon that they wanted to be granted. The couple asked the Lord that they want nothing but pure and undiluted love and devotion for his holy feet. Hearing this wise request from his devotees, Lord Vishnu was very pleased and amused because he did not expect that after doing such hard penance the couple will not want any worldly rewards. Of course the Lord granted this wish. This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 150 –to—Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 151.

All the joys and pleasures of the world and heaven taken together are like the shallow water of a stream, while the spiritual bliss and ecstasy obtained by Bhakti is like the ocean of nectar.

It is said in the Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 1/2/28-29 that: “The ultimate aim of the Vedas is realisation of Lord Vasudeva (the Supreme Being); the various sacrifices also have this aim of attainment of Vasudeva; the different forms of Yoga also lead to this Vasudeva; all sorts of rituals have their end in Vasudeva; and all wisdom has its culmination in Vasudeva; all austerities and penances have Vasudeva

as their goal; all spiritual virtues aim at the realisation of this Vasudeva; and all destinies end in Vasudeva.”]

१ /१ /९ तद्वतः प्रपत्तिशब्दाच्च न ज्ञानमितरप्रपत्तिवत् ॥ ९ ॥

1 /1 /9 tadvataḥ prapattiśabdācca na jñānamitaraprapattivat || 9||

(1/1/9) Even a person who has Gyan (i.e. who is an expert in metaphysics and theology; who is wise, learned and enlightened; who is self-realised and Brahm-realised) may surrender or submit (**prapatti**) himself before the Lord God (in order to fulfil certain of his spiritual objectives) like a devotee who surrenders himself before his beloved Lord in order to attain oneness with him¹.

But simply surrendering or submitting oneself before the Lord God does not mean that a person has Bhakti for him². (9)

[¹Both types of persons derive bliss and beatitude with this self-surrender, albeit with a difference. What is the difference? Surrendering to the Lord God in Bhakti by a devotee is different from surrendering to him in Gyan by a person who is an expert in the knowledge of the scriptures and metaphysics. This is because a person who surrenders himself in Bhakti does not expect anything from his beloved Lord; he surrenders before the Lord just because he loves his Lord God very dearly and more than anything else, while a person who knows the rewards of Brahm-realisation would surrender to the Lord because he expects some of the spiritual rewards that come with it. So therefore, while the ‘Bhakta’, i.e. a devotee, surrenders himself before the Lord just for the sake of his love for the Lord, the ‘Gyani’, i.e. a person who is learned in the scriptures, would surrender before the same Lord God but he does so as he expects some reward by doing this. To wit, the ‘devotee’ surrenders himself before the Lord for the sake of his love for him as he expects nothing in return, but a ‘learned person’ surrenders himself before the same Lord with some sort of expectation from him.

Though it is true that Bhakti is selfless because the devotee does not want any reward for his devotion and love for the Lord God, but it is also true that it is not without any reward, albeit these rewards come on their own accord and unasked for. Gyan also has rewards, but they are sought after and attained consciously by the learned person.

So we see that in both the cases of Bhakti and Gyan the spiritual aspirant has to surrender his own self before the Lord, but in the case of Bhakti it is done in a selfless manner that is driven by pure love and affection for the Lord God because Bhakti itself is based on the premise that it is love for the Lord God for the sake of love only, while in the case of Gyan it is done with one’s spiritual interest and welfare in mind, hence it is not selfless.

²A man may surrender himself before a deity in the belief that this deity would fulfil his wishes. So there is some worldly desire in this relationship. If the objective of this surrendering is achieved, the person who surrenders would continue to worship that deity, otherwise he would certainly look to some other deity who would fulfil his needs. So this sort of surrender or submission is definitely not Bhakti. It may be driven by Gyan—i.e. the knowledge that a particular deity is empowered to fulfil a particular wish of the worshipper, but there is no element of love, affection or

devotion involved for the deity. It can be said that it is like a business proposal—the deity fulfils the worshipper's wishes, and the worshipper continues to offer his reverence to the deity. This is surely and certainly this type of surrender or submission before the Lord is neither Bhakti nor Gyan at all!

It is not 'Bhakti' because there is no trace of love, affection and devotion for the deity involved, and this surrender before the deity has not come from the heart but it is a selfish wish for certain worldly fulfilment of desire. It is not 'Gyan' either because the reward expected by surrendering before a deity is not attainment of eternity, nor bliss and beatitude that comes with liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation of the soul, but some kind of worldly gain. A person who has true Gyan would know that the world is transient and it is worthless to ask for anything related to it, and surely therefore he would never surrender or submit himself before any God for fulfilment of worldly wishes.

Therefore it is conclusively proved that merely surrendering or submitting before the Lord God (prapatti) is neither the way of Bhakti nor the way of Gyan!

There is another way we can interpret this verse. It has been said that even those who have Gyan, i.e. those who are wise and learned, too surrender themselves before someone in order to fulfil their desires. For instance, even a learned person who has some desire that needs to be fulfilled will be inclined to surrender himself to any junior god or deity if he thinks that his desires can be fulfilled by doing so even though he knows fully well that such fulfilment would be transient in its nature as the world itself is transient, that such surrender and its expectant fruit would not grant him any kind of eternal peace and fulfilment as is obtainable by being contented, by having renunciation and by obtaining the bliss of self and Brahm realisation. Nevertheless, desires for some gain may force even a wise and learned person to surrender and show affection to some junior deity in the hope of fulfilling his wishes.

Refer: *Srimad Bhagvad Geeta*, 7/19-23, where Lord Krishna says: ““A truly enlightened soul is one who worships me with the realisation that there is no other God but me. But such souls are rare. Those who think that they are wise and learned are often carried away by many desires so much so that they begin worship other deities in the hope of fulfilment of these desires. Whatever form the devotee chooses to worship me with a craving for fulfilment of some worldly desire, I establish his faith in that particular form he has chosen to worship. This enables the devotee to fulfil his worldly desires. But these so-called wise, learned and enlightened men are actually of low understanding as they forget that everything in this mortal world is perishable. Such people do not find eternity. On the other hand, my devotees have no worldly desires, nor are they attached to subsidiary form of mine. So they find me, they come to me, and they become eternal like me. To wit, Gyan does not ensure that a devotee would find eternity and bliss.”

Hence, to surrender before any deity does not automatically mean that the person is wise, learned and enlightened, because such surrender to fulfil worldly desire only indicate that the person is totally ignorant of the essence of the knowledge of the scriptures (Gyan) that he claims to have.

But surrendering before the Lord God in Bhakti is different from the above surrendering because in the case of Bhakti it is selfless, it is driven by pure love and affection for the Lord, and there is no desire or expectation involved in it.]

Canto 1/ Part 2

॥ शाण्डिल्य भक्ति सूत्रम् ॥

प्रथमोऽध्यायः

द्वितीयमाह्निकम्

|| śāṇḍilya bhakti sūtram ||

prathamō 'dhyāyah

dvitīyamāhnikam

१/२/१ सा सुख्येतरापेक्षितत्वात् ॥ १० ॥

1 / 2 / 1 sã sukh'yētarāpēkṣitatvāt || 10||

(1/2/1) Amongst all the spiritual practices (that lead to attainment of God-realisation, to attaining eternity of the soul, and attaining bliss and beatitude by having liberation and deliverance from this mundane existence), Bhakti is the chief one. This is because other practices (such as Gyan or self and Brahm realisation) depend upon Bhakti for bearing fruits.

To wit, Bhakti is the primary and fundamental means of God-realisation, and all other means are subsidiary to it. (10)

['Bhakti' stands for total commitment and devotion towards the Lord God, total surrender to him, to have undiluted and untainted love, faith and belief in him, to pursue the path leading to God-realisation without having any doubt, confusion and distraction, to be steady and unwavering on the way, and to feel extremely ecstatic and blissful.

Since the primary requirement for Bhakti is to have deep love and affection for the Lord God, it follows that a devotee would be totally focused on his path, and think of nothing else but his beloved Lord just like the case of a person who falls in love with another in this world. For a lover it does not matter if his object of love, the beloved, 'the darling of his heart', loves him or not, or what good qualities, if any, the beloved may have, or the geographical distance between the lover and the beloved, and all such related matters. A true lover would be lost in the thoughts of the beloved so much so that time comes to a standstill for him, and the surrounding world cease to exist.

In Bhakti the 'heart' is involved, while in other spiritual practices such as Yoga, Tapa, Japa Yagya, Karma, Dharma etc. the 'mind and the intellect' are involved. When the heart gets involved in any pursuit, the person becomes fully committed to his object because he becomes emotionally and sentimentally attached to it. If only the mind is involved then the chances are that he would have to cope with distractions. This is also observed in day-to-day life. When a person is in love with someone, then he would find it hard to focus his mind on the job at hand, for the heart

would keep tugging at him and every now and then his mind would turn away from the work and start thinking of the beloved, the ‘darling of the heart’. To wit, the heart would succeed in overpowering the orders of the mind.

So is the case also with Bhakti vis-à-vis other spiritual paths to God-realisation. One may feel distracted in a lesser or greater degree while doing meditation (Yoga), contemplation (Dhyan), repetition of the Lord’s holy name (Japa), doing righteous deeds (Karma), living a meritorious life (Dharma), doing sacrifices (Yagya), renunciation and dispassion (Vairagya), going on pilgrimage (Tirtha) etc. if the heart does not agree fully with these practices, for it would keep nagging at the aspirant and pull his mind away from what it wants to do or is doing towards that object which the ‘heart loves to do or wants to do’. To wit, all other spiritual endeavours would succeed only when they rely on the virtues of Bhakti—i.e. to love and be totally devoted to the Lord God, be unwavering in one’s spiritual pursuit and be fully committed to God-realisation by overcoming all hurdles.

So in effect this verse implies that the sort of devotion, sincerity and commitment and other unique characteristics that Bhakti possesses are also to be practiced by the followers of other spiritual paths. Or, it can be said that all other spiritual paths are subsidiaries of Bhakti. To wit, if there is no Bhakti (love, affection and devotion for the Lord God) in the heart of the spiritual aspirant, then no other path would lead him to true God-realisation. He may get a taste of this eclectic spiritual transcendental state of God-realisation with its bliss and ecstasy, but it would be fleeting as he will not get it permanently, nor would he be able to taste this divine nectar in its purest form.

If one does not possess the unique virtues characteristic of Bhakti, then no matter which spiritual path he has chosen for himself for God-realisation he will find that his spiritual journey is full of problems and cumbersome, and the chances of failure are great. One of the primary reasons for this is that in the case of Bhakti the Lord God himself takes care of the spiritual seeker’s future, whereas in all other paths he has to fend for himself.

This fact is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 116 where it is said that Maya (worldly delusions) and Bhakti are both close to Lord Ram (the personified form of the Supreme Being), but while Maya is like a dancer in a royal court who has to dance in accordance to the pleasure of the king, Bhakti is a maid who serves the king directly and is his favourite. So Maya is always afraid of Bhakti and subservient to it because it fears that if Bhakti gets annoyed then the Lord would also get annoyed.

To wit, other spiritual practices such as Yoga, Tapa, Karma, Gyan etc. will not be able to help the aspirant to attain true and sustainable bliss, beatitude and spiritual peace that comes with God-realisation if Bhakti is not invoked.

Say, what purpose will be served if one merely discusses about the quality, taste and benefit of certain kind of food at the intellectual level without actually eating and enjoying it. Can anyone get nourishment by merely analysing the food’s nutritional value or discussing about it, if he is not able to actually eat it? So it is with Bhakti—say, what is the use of Gyan (knowledge of the scriptures and of the Supreme Being) and all other spiritual practices if one is not able to drench oneself in the cool and refreshing water of bliss and joy and feel blessed that comes by loving and endearing the Lord God, something that Bhakti teaches him. So therefore, Bhakti is the best method to enjoy the bliss and blessedness that comes with God-realisation. There is no doubt about it.]

१/२/२ प्रकरणाच्च ॥ ११ ॥

1 / 2 / 2 prakaraṇācca || 11||

(1/2/2) There are references in the scriptures with regard to this (i.e. to what has been said in the previous verse). (11)

[One such reference is found in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 116. It has already been quoted herein above in the note appended to the previous verse no. 10.

Some of the other references are the following:

Chandogya Upanishad, 7/23/1 says: “That Supreme Being is the pinnacle of the knowledge contained in the scriptures, and is the final goal of all religious and philosophical concepts. It is only from him that bliss is derived, and it only possible by completely surrendering to him and having devotion for him alone.”

Similarly, Chandogya Upanishad, 7/25/2 says: “All this is nothing but the supreme Self known as Brahm or the cosmic Consciousness. He who knows this, he who is convinced of this, he who sees this truth, he indeed develops deep affection and devotion for this Truth in the form of the Self, he always thinks of this Truth, he finds pleasure in this Truth, he pursues this Truth, and finally he attains this Truth to become one with it. This transcendental state is achieved if one has saturated himself with this Truth (i.e. when one is deeply in love with the Lord God who represents this spiritual Truth).”

To wit, even the Upanishads endorse the importance of having complete faith, devotion and surrender to the Lord God as well as to have deep love exclusively for him if one wishes to attain eternal bliss and beatitude in life.]

१/२/३ दर्शनफलमिति चेन्न तेन व्यवधानात् ॥ १२ ॥

1 / 2 / 3 darśanaphalamiti cēna tēna vyavadhānāt || 12||

(1/2/3) Some may say that to ‘see God’ is the ultimate reward of Bhakti. But it is not so, for there are obvious objections to and discrepancies in this theory. (12)

[Bhakti does not want any reward; it is a selfless service to the Lord God that revolves around undiluted and untainted pure love for him from the depth of the heart. The true devotee does not say, ‘Oh Lord, I want to see you.’ This is like ordering the Lord which no humble servant would ever think of doing.

The term ‘seeing’ can be interpreted at two levels of consciousness: one is at that a person actually sees someone at the physical level of existence with his physical eyes, and the second is that a person experiences the presence of the other person at a subtle level even without actually seeing him with his eyes.

The former way of ‘seeing’ relates to the gross world and the gross organ of sight known as the eye. This organ of the body can see only gross things of the material world, and not those things that are actually there but have a subtle presence. This is evident from the following example: we can actually see the flower with our eyes, but can we see the scent of that flower? A blind man does not actually see the

flower, but he will immediately know that a flower is near because he can perceive its presence by the virtue of the flower's subtle quality represented by its scent. Similarly, we can't see air, but does that mean that air is not present around us?

In the spiritual field a devotee does not have to actually 'see his beloved Lord God in physical terms with his own eyes' to derive the profundity of ecstasy, joy, blissfulness and blessedness that comes with God-realisation. God is not a physical thing to be seen or perceived by any of the gross sense organs of the creature's body. He is pure Consciousness that is too sublime and subtle for this to happen at the gross level of mundane existence. God is experienced and perceived only at a subtle level of consciousness, a level that transcends the mundane and the gross.

So a devotee deeply in love with his beloved Lord God lives in a perpetual state of bliss and blessedness as he 'sees' his darling Lord with the subtle eyes of his consciousness; he experiences the presence of his beloved Lord right inside his own being so much so that he feels his entire self has been possessed by the Lord. The ecstasy and bliss then becomes natural and inherent to him because God is bliss and joy personified! There is no separate entity now like a devotee and his Lord God—for they have become one and unified.

For others who do not have that level of enlightenment or spiritual attainment to understand what 'seeing of God' actually means, the claim that the devotee is so ecstatic and blissful because he is seeing his Lord right in his front would seem sheer madness and nonsense. It is because they only know one level of seeing anything—the level at which gross things of the world can be seen. They have no knowledge of seeing things at the subtle level of consciousness.

The Supreme Being's primary form is pure cosmic Consciousness that it is subtle and sublime, and it is so all-pervading that it is present in the form of all that exists in this creation. So in a sense we can 'see' the Lord God in every creature and every unit of creation if we have the 'eye' of wisdom.

It often times happens that the same invisible Lord who is an embodiment of cosmic Consciousness sometimes reveals himself in a physical form for the pleasure of his devotees. When this happens, the concerned devotee is able to 'see' the Lord in physical terms also in this world—as happens during the various incarnations of the Lord. But that does not mean that a devotee who has reached a transcendental state of consciousness when he can experience the presence of God inside his own self, resulting in his being in an extremely ecstatic and blissful state is deceiving others simply because the Lord God is not there in physical terms that can be verified.

Therefore, it cannot be said that 'seeing God' in physical form is the only criterion for success in Bhakti or its culmination. The objection to this proposition has been explained herein above in clear terms.]

१/२/३ दृष्टत्वाच्च ॥ १३ ॥

1/2/3 dr̥ṣṭatvācca || 13||

(1/2/3) This (i.e. what has been said in verse no. 12 herein above) is also observed in the world¹.

[There is another way of interpreting this verse as follows:] It is also observed in the world that when one sees something it is easy for him to develop love and affection for it. So therefore, when a devotee sees a form of the Lord God or witnesses the blissful state of others who have experienced God first hand (i.e. have attained

God-realisation), it ignites a longing in his heart for the Lord, he also wants to witness the Lord and derive bliss and beatitude experienced by others². (13)

[¹It is observed in the physical world that the sun, however brilliant it may be, can be seen only through a transparent material such as glass, and not through anything that is opaque and hard such as wood or stone. But not being able to see the sun does not mean that the sun is not there.

Likewise, the Lord God reveals himself only to a devotee whose heart is softened by love and devotion for the Lord, and not to others, including those who have Gyan. But not being able to see or experience the Lord in this way by Gyan (gnosis) and other spiritual practices does not mean that he has no existence.

We have already read about the example of the ‘flower’ and the ‘air’ in the note appended to verse no. 12. So, not seeing God in physical terms by a devotee is no proof that Bhakti has no effect. Surely it has, but its effect is seen and felt and experienced at a subtle and sublime level that transcends the grossness of the world because the subject it deals with, i.e. the ‘self’ and the ‘supreme Self’, is also subtle and sublime as it is ‘pure consciousness’ and *not* like the gross things of the world and the equally gross organs of the physical body of the living being whose presence can be ascertained only by physically seeing them.

²This interpretation refers to the devotee beginning to have love for the Lord God when he reads and hears about the Lord’s glories as narrated in the scriptures and glorified by the saints. The devotee realises that the Lord is his best friend and well-wisher, that the Lord would selflessly help and protect him, and that the Lord is the only one who can mend his future and provide him with peace and happiness that he so much longs for. So the devotee begins to love and be devoted to the Lord.

Hence, Gyan or knowledge of something helps a person to develop love and affection for that object because he ‘sees’ something good for himself.

In this situation too, the reward of Gyan is Bhakti, and vice versa also. To wit, first there is the knowledge (“Gyan”) of the existence of the divinity known as God, then there is the knowledge of the benefits that would accrue by being devoted to this God and surrendering before him, and this finally results in development of love and affection (“Bhakti”) for the Lord. So, Gyan leads to Bhakti.

On the other hand, when one begins to love the Lord God, one would be too happy to know more about him as this knowledge would only cement his bond of love for the Lord, make his commitment and devotion for the Lord more robust as it would be based on conscious decision that relies on strong evidence and truth rather than on hearsay and imaginations.

It is said in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 89 that: “The life’s torments do not go away without worshipping Lord Ram. But without the grace of the Lord one is not able to know the Lord’s greatness, divinity, majesty, glories and truth. Without this knowledge or awareness it is difficult to be steady in one’s commitment and faith in the Lord, and without it Bhakti or devotion and love for the Lord will not be steadfast and deep-rooted.”

And how does one come to know about the Lord? It is by the grace of the Lord himself—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3 that precedes Doha no. 127 that says: “Oh Lord! One comes to know about you only by your grace, and once that happens the spiritual seeker becomes one with you.” Obviously this is also the aim of Bhakti—to be one with the Lord God, to establish oneness between the devotee and the Lord he worships.

From an intelligent and collated the reading of the verses it becomes clear that though Bhakti is independent and self-sustaining yet it is also true that knowledge (Gyan) and devotion (Bhakti) are complementary and supplementary to each other.]

१/२/४ अत एव तदभावाद्वल्लवीनाम् ॥ १४ ॥

1 / 2 / 4 ata ēva tadabhāvādvallavīnām || 14||

(1/2/4) That is why the Gopis (the milkmaids or female cowherds of Vrindavan; “vallavīnām”) attained liberation and deliverance by merely having deep love and affection for Lord Krishna and being devoted to him in their love inspite of their not having access to any whit of metaphysical or theological knowledge of the scriptures, or being able to see the Lord in physical terms (after he left Vrindavan and moved to Mathura and onwards to Dwarka). (14)

[In this context, refer to Narad Bhakti Sutra, verse nos. 18-22 which directly relate to this verse.

The Gopis of Vrindavan were ordinary householders. They had never studied any scripture. Their life revolved around mundane existence and humdrum affairs of daily life. Yet they were praised by the Gods and lauded in the scriptures, and they found liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death by just having something as plain and simple as love for Lord Krishna. This is being cited here to stress that for emancipation and salvation of the soul nothing is needed, except to have love and devotion for the Lord God. Gyan has no role to play here.

The Gopis loved and adored Lord Krishna from the core of their hearts. But the Lord had to move on with other duties of his life, so he had to leave then for good. Though he was not visible to them in physical terms but his image was permanently etched in the Gopis’ hearts so much so that this heart itself became a shrine dedicated to the Lord. Whenever they closed their eyes they could ‘see’ Krishna. The Lord knew it and he kept contact with them at a transcendental plane, even remaining lost in their memory as much as they were lost in his. This eclectic form of Bhakti was not comprehensible to his companion named Uddhav who could not understand why the Lord was absent minded most of the time. So the Lord sent him to Vrindavan to test the Gopis’ love for him. What transpired changed the life of Uddhav and the entire concept of Bhakti for the Lord that he had before this. Uddhav found the Gopis living like someone who is drunk and intoxicated. They had no care of their homes or household chores, or even of their own selves, tears gushed forth by the mere mention of the Lord, and they lived like walking corpses—so lost they were in the thoughts of Krishna. Refer to Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇ, 10/82/45.

These Gopis attained emancipation and salvation because they remained ever engrossed in the thoughts of Lord Krishna, a personified form of the Supreme Being; they revelled in this thought, they remained ecstatic and eternally blissful in it, and they were drowned in it so much so that their mind stopped from wandering elsewhere as it remained submerged in the thoughts of the Lord, their past sins wasted away and no deeds accrued to them in the future as their inner-self was not engaged in doing any worldly deeds because it remained totally fixed on the Lord with no time or inclination for anything else. Thus being the case, the Gopis attained the fruit of their lives; they attained Mukti—final dissolution that leads to beatitude and eternity.

It is said in Vishnu Puran, 5/13/19-22 that these Gopis were so ecstatic by the remembrance of Lord Krishna that “some of them danced and sang, some sat motionless as in a trance, some even fainted and died so that they found instant liberation and deliverance because their mind was focused on Lord Krishna at that moment.”

A similar situation is described in Ram Charit Manas at two places. The first instance is when Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman had gone out for sigh-seeing in the city of Janakpur where they had gone with their Guru sage Vishwamitra to attend the marriage ceremony of Sita, the daughter of the king of that place. All the citizens, males, females and children of all ages, were mesmerised by the sight of the Lord. They forgot about their household affairs and rushed out to see the Lord up close. All throughout the visit it appeared that the entire city had poured out on the streets with people milling around the Lord and following him wherever he went. The balconies and lofts of the houses were overcrowded by ladies craning out their heads to have a glimpse of the Lord; the men-folk pushed and shoved to be near him; and the children vied with each others to hold the Lord’s hand and pull him in this and that direction. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Doha no. 225.

The second instance of this sort of undiluted affection for Lord Ram is described when he was on the way to the forest. All the innocent and simple-hearted people of the villages and hamlets that fell on the way of the Lord’s journey to the forest were extremely exhilarated, thrilled and ecstatic when they came to know that the Lord had come their way. The mere sight of the Lord made them exuberant and fulfilled in the same way as an ascetic feels when he attains self-realisation and Brahm-realisation. Some offered the Lord a seat to take rest, some brought refreshments, some talked with him and others just stood dumbfounded, some smiled and some had tears in their eyes, some offered their own homes to the Lord to stay while others wanted to accompany him, some stayed where they were and some followed him for as long as they could go, some who could not come at that time rushed after him to meet him a long way ahead. And when the Lord moved ahead on his journey, he left all the village folks numbed with grief and overwhelmed with love and affection for him which they harboured for the rest of their lives. This has been elaborately described in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 109—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 110; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 112—to Doha no. 122.

The important point to note here is that none of them—the Gopis of Vrindavan, the citizens of Janakpur or the villagers whom Lord Ram met en-route to the forest—were ‘Gyanis’, i.e. none had studied the scriptures, theology and metaphysics. Yet they attained the level of bliss and blessedness and found ecstasy and joy that is attained by ascetics and sages when they become Brahm-realised and self-realised. These humble people did not even know that they were seeing the Supreme Being in a human form right in front of their eyes. They fell in love with the Lord for the sake of love alone. The idea is that Bhakti is a spontaneous emotion of love and affection for the Lord God that has its origin in the heart and not the mind as is the case with Gyan.]

१ / २ / ५ भक्त्या जानातीति चेन्नाभिज्ञप्त्या साहाय्यात् ॥ १५ ॥

1 / 2 / 5 bhaktyā jānātīti cēnnābhijñāptyā sāhāyyāt || 15||

(1/2/5) [The Lord says:] “One becomes God-realised with the help of Bhakti.” One comes to know the Lord God fully and in totality with the help of Bhakti. To wit, Bhakti helps in attaining Gyan or knowledge of God; Bhakti leads to God-realisation. (15)

[There are two ways in which this verse can be read and understood. Let us see them.

(a) The first interpretation is that this verse establishes the supremacy of Bhakti over Gyan though the aim of both spiritual paths is the same—i.e. God-realisation.

We have read in the note of verse no. 14 herein above that prior knowledge of the Lord God is not necessary to develop love and affection for him as was the case with Gopis of Vrindavan with respect to their love for Lord Krishna, or the citizens of Janakpur and the villagers who fell in love with Lord Ram when they met him.

Though it is true that prior knowledge of the greatness and glories of someone one begins to love surely helps to reinforce one’s love and affection for that person, but it is not absolutely necessary. It is a common observation in this world that when a person falls in love with someone, usually it is a spontaneous emotional urge that does not at all depend upon any prior knowledge of the virtues and goodness of the object of one’s affection. This knowledge may come later on when one comes closer to the beloved and keeps constant company with him or her.

Similarly, Bhakti brings the devotee close to his beloved Lord God in a natural and spontaneous manner, and it is later on that he comes to know about the majesty, the greatness, the glories and the divinities of the Lord when he begins to feel the ecstasy, the blissfulness and the beatitude that comes automatically with his association with the Lord God. He then experiences the blessedness of God-realisation that would have come to him if he had pursued the path of Gyan—the path of knowledge and gnosis, the path of acquiring wisdom and enlightenment through the study of the scriptures and practicing its many spiritual doctrines that lead to self and God realisation.

But at the same time it ought to be noted that the statement “one comes to have knowledge of the Lord God by the path of Bhakti” also means that ‘Gyan’, or the knowledge of God or God-realisation, is the aim of Bhakti. Establishing oneness of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul is the aim of Bhakti as is also the aim of Gyan. But Bhakti is independent while Gyan is dependent upon many factors. So therefore Bhakti is superior to Gyan. Refer verse no. 10.

(b) There is another way this verse can be interpreted. Since Bhakti (devotion) leads to God-realisation, it is a “tool” of Gyan (knowledge of God; self-realisation; gnosis; spiritual wisdom and enlightenment).

Now, this statement is true as well as not so true. It is true because both Bhakti and Gyan complement and supplement each other as they both help the spiritual aspirant to realise God. It is not so true because we have already read that Bhakti is superior to Gyan as the latter is dependent upon many factors while Bhakti is independent. Refer verse no. 10.

But it must be remembered that Gyan has its own importance and should not be undermined with respect to its ability to provide God-realisation. This fact will also be endorsed in the next verse no. 16 herein below.

So, what is the relationship between Bhakti and Gyan? It is made clear in Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 18/55 which explicitly explains: “Through having supreme

devotion for me (the Lord God) the devotee comes to know me in reality, of who I am, and how great, majestic, holy and divine I am. By this knowledge he forthwith enters into my supreme form to become one with me—i.e. he becomes God-realised, and attains emancipation and salvation for his soul.”

Similarly we read in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 89 that says: “The life’s torments do not go away without worshipping and having devotion for Lord Ram. But without the grace of the Lord one is not able to know the Lord’s greatness, divinity, majesty, glories and truth—i.e. have Gyan or knowledge of the Lord. Without this knowledge or awareness it is difficult to be steady in one’s commitment to the Lord and have unwavering faith in him, and without this, Bhakti or devotion and love for the Lord will not be steadfast and deep-rooted.”

Again in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3 that precedes Doha no. 127 it is said that: “Oh Lord! One comes to know about you only by your grace, and once that happens the spiritual seeker becomes one with you.” Obviously this is also the aim of Bhakti—to be one with the Lord God, to establish oneness between the devotee and the Lord he worships.

The implied meaning is that one should not discard Gyan altogether even if one has Bhakti for the Lord God, for Gyan is needed to reinforce one’s commitment and faith in God. So therefore, whatever doubts that may linger in the mind of the devotee with respect to Bhakti and its spiritual goal will be taken care of by Gyan.

We conclude that Gyan is an aid to Bhakti; it tells us how to have devotion for the Lord God and how to attain success in it. It plays a ‘secondary’ role because there may be an instance when one can spontaneously develop natural love for the Lord God. However, Gyan enlightens a person about the true nature and form of the Lord God for whom he must have Bhakti, because otherwise he may go astray and offer his services to some secondary or junior god in the mistaken belief that he is serving the Supreme Being.]

१ /२ /६ प्रागुक्तं च ॥ १६॥

1 /2 /6 prāguktaṁ ca || 16||

(1/2/6) These principles have already been mentioned before. (16)

[A quick reading of the previous verses would clearly indicate that the discussion is about Gyan and Bhakti as means to God-realisation, and which of the two is more important than the other.

The first argument is that one must first have Gyan or knowledge of God, and then Bhakti or devotion and love for him follows naturally. This is endorsed in Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 18/54 which says: “The Brahm-realised soul is always cheerful; he never grieves nor feels happy or craves for anything (i.e. he practices exemplary equanimity, dispassion, detachment and renunciation). For him all the creatures are the same and he interacts with them equally. Such an exalted and enlightened soul surely attains me, the Supreme Being, by having supreme devotion (Bhakti) for me.” Refer also to note (b) appended to the previous verse no. 15.

When one is certain of the goal and its prime benefits, one would strive to reach that goal with full commitment of the mind and the heart, and with full zeal. Prior knowledge of who the Lord God is, what are his greatness and glories, would

help the spiritual aspirant to be steady in his path of devotion. One cannot reach a goal if the goal itself is not clear. This clarity about one's spiritual goal and how to reach it comes from Gyan. Then Bhakti is a natural outcome because Gyan also tells the spiritual aspirant that Bhakti is the easiest and the best path to God-realisation.

To wit, true Gyan not only enlightens the devotee about his spiritual goal in life, but it also recommends the path of Bhakti to him.

But the other argument is also equally true and holds equally good. It is that Bhakti is superior to Gyan. This is the obviously main theme of this book. In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 18/55, Lord Krishna explicitly says: "Through having supreme devotion for me (the Lord God) the devotee comes to know me in reality, of who I am, and how great, majestic, holy and divine I am. By this knowledge he forthwith enters into my supreme form to become one with me—i.e. he becomes God-realised, and attains emancipation and salvation for his soul."

Similar idea is expressed at many places in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, we read about it in its Uttar Kand's following verses: (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 45; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 84; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 115; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 116; and (v) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 119—to Chaupai line no. 15 that precedes Doha no. 120.

We shall now cite only one example from these aforesaid verses of Ram Charit Manas to see how Bhakti is said to be superior to Gyan. In Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 115 it is said that: "A person who abandons Bhakti, which is like the all wish fulfilling cow known as Kamdhenu, and goes out in search of the acacia plant in order to find its sap to quench his thirst (instead of quenching it by drinking the milk of this cow)—is indeed a very stupid fellow. So likewise, a person who wishes to find happiness, bliss and beatitude by some other path except Bhakti is like a stupid fellow who wants to cross a huge ocean symbolised by this world of transmigration by trying to swim across it instead of boarding a strong ship that would easily take him across."

Briefly it can be said that a person who has become Brahm-realised (or God-realised) by the means of Bhakti has no need for Gyan again, albeit Gyan may help him in this path at some stage.]

१/२/७ एतेन विकल्पोऽपि प्रत्युक्तः ॥ १७॥

1 / 2 / 7 ētēna vikalpō 'pi pratyuktaḥ || 17||

(1/2/7) This fundamental knowledge (about Bhakti and Gyan, that both of them have one single objective—which is to bring about God-realisation) removes all disputes, debates, paradoxes, contradictions and oppositions (with respect to Bhakti and Gyan, and their objectives). (17)

[To wit, Bhakti and Gyan do not oppose each other, but they aid each other. They are complimentary and supplementary to each other. No one of them is either superior or inferior to the other. They equally help the aspirant to reach his spiritual goal which is the same in both the cases.

This verse is intended to settle all disputation about the importance and significance of these two noble paths to God-realisation—the path of Bhakti and the path of Gyan. It settles that both are equal and effective. The hidden idea is that the spiritual aspirant has to choose for himself which path would suit him best. As has already been said earlier, if the spiritual aspirant is inclined to learn about his goals first and apply his mind to everything he does, then Gyan is the path for him. On the other hand, if he is driven by the call of his heart more than the mind, then Bhakti is the path best suited for him.]

१/२/८ देवभक्तिरितरस्मिन् साहचर्यात् ॥ १८ ॥

1 / 2 / 8 dēvabhaktiritarasmin sāhacaryāt || 18||

(1/2/8) If Bhakti is applied to or understood to mean devotion to any other entity except the Supreme Being, then it is a degraded or inferior kind of Bhakti. To wit, offering worship to any sundry god or goddess or any ordinary deity except the Supreme Being (Brahm) is not the true form or purpose of Bhakti. (18)

[Bhakti means ‘devotion, surrender and love for the Lord God’, but this verse clarifies that the object of this devotion and love should be the ‘Supreme Being’, the Lord of this world, the God who is supreme and there is no other God superior to him.

To wit, Bhakti does not mean devotion for and surrendering of oneself before any random deity or god or goddess. Worshipping any random god or goddess or deity is not Bhakti even if it is done with due reverence and faith. Such Bhakti is not true spiritual practice as it would never provide the sort of spiritual reward one expects from it. This kind of Bhakti will not give eternal peace, bliss or beatitude; it will not grant liberation, deliverance, emancipation or salvation for the soul.

Lord Ram has said in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 46 that: “If one calls one’s self my true devotee (“daasa”—literally meaning a servant but actually the meaning is a faithful devotee) but expects anything from others, then say what right does he have to claim this privileged status (of being my devotee). What more can I say except that this is the principle I follow.”

Then once again in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 41 the Lord says that: “Thus, those who are wise and erudite worship me alone because they know that all other kinds of worship result in delusions and countless miseries.”

There is another instance when Lord Ram reiterates this fact. It is when he tells sage Narad in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 43 that: “Therefore, taking everything into consideration and weighing all the pros and the cons, those who are experts and wise in their knowledge of the scriptures prefer to have Bhakti for me (and worship me alone) even if they have access to Gyan (gnosis; metaphysics and theology).”

To wit, Lord Ram clearly and unequivocally says here that a true devotee is one who does not worship any other god or goddess, or any deity for that matter, except the Supreme Lord himself.

Refer: Shvetashvatara Upanishad, 6/23 which says: “Bhakti should be offered only to the Supreme Being, and not to even one’s Guru (teacher) or other Gods.” At the most, some worldly desires would be fulfilled by this inferior kind of Bhakti; nothing more.

Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 9/23-25, says: “Those who have Bhakti inside them (i.e. in their heart) but use this virtue to worship gods other than the Supreme Being (in the hope of fulfilment of certain desires), then though it is true that they are worshipping me in these forms yet this kind of worship is not the proper way to worship me. Since such worshippers are deluded under the influence of Maya because they do not recognise who I am (as they worship other Gods instead of directly worshipping me), they fall back into the cycle of transmigration instead of breaking free from it and attaining deliverance. This is because those who worship other Gods go to them (and all these Gods are said to preside over different aspects of creation that are assigned to them, but surely not the supreme state of beatitude and blessedness that is the sole realm of Brahm). Only those who worship me (the Supreme Being) come to me to get final deliverance.”

To wit, true Bhakti is direct devotion for the Supreme Lord, and not to his many other forms—because this latter kind of Bhakti may fulfil the worshipper’s worldly desires, but it will not give him emancipation and salvation.

We come across countless instances in the world when people propitiate sundry gods and goddesses or worship this or that deity for fulfilment of so many of their desires because they believe that the particular deity is empowered to fulfil his wishes. Some want wealth, some wish to have children, some yearn for success in career, some long for fame, some want to overcome adversities that dog them, and so on and so forth. All such people do whatever they can, with full faith and conviction, to please the gods or the goddesses who have the power to fulfil their worldly wishes. Such people make vows that if their wishes are fulfilled then they will make certain special offerings to these gods and goddesses. This is pure and simple business. This is not the purpose of Bhakti, and this is not how it should be practiced. This verse warns us against this situation.

True Bhakti is deep and selfless love and devotion for the Supreme Lord, and not anyone else; true Bhakti is to seek nothing in return from the Lord, and not ask for this and that. A true devotee leaves himself in the care of his Lord God, but it must be remembered that the Lord is very obliging, graceful and merciful, so he will not let the devotee’s surrender go unrewarded. The quality and the quantum of any reward are in according with the status and dignity of the person who gives the reward. An emperor’s reward for services rendered unto him will surely be far superior to the reward given by a small king of a small kingdom. Hence, the reward that the Supreme Lord of world gives to his devotee is the best he can expect. And what is it? Herein comes handy the true understanding of the word ‘Gyan’. Gyan or spiritual wisdom and enlightenment that comes with deep study of the scriptures tells us that the best and the ultimate reward for a creature is to attain freedom from worldly miseries and torments associated with the endless cycle of birth and death in this mundane gross world, and have eternal peace and bliss for himself. How does this happen? It happens when the devotee realises that the world is false, that his true identity is not his gross physical body but his Atma which is pure consciousness, and that final liberation from the cycle of transmigration with its attendant horrors comes when this Atma of his merges with the cosmic Atma or the cosmic Consciousness represented by Brahm, the Supreme Being. This is known as ‘self and God realisation’. Bhakti leads to this, and hence eternal bliss, peace, beatitude and felicity as well as freedom from the cycle of birth and death are the reward of Bhakti. To wit, seeking wealth, prosperity, children, fame, career and other successes is not Bhakti at all. These attainments only drag the person further down in the pit of problems and they fortify his attachments with a world that is inherently entangling, horrifyingly gross and troubling, so how can he

ever have peace and happiness for which he wants any of the things of this material world in the first place? Surely he has no ‘Gyan’ or true knowledge in him; he is deluded and ignorant.

Another significant point is to be noted here. In a subtle way this verse also points towards the importance of ‘Gyan’. The verse says that only service rendered to the Supreme Being is true form of Bhakti, and not that rendered to any other subordinate forms of the Lord. How do we know who is the Supreme Being who is to be worshipped? We come to understand this only when we learn about him by studying the scriptures, analysing their doctrines and discussions with other senior and learned people who have this knowledge. This is how Gyan is acquired. So therefore, Gyan plays a crucial role in the fulfilment of Bhakti. To wit, devoid of true Gyan, true Bhakti cannot be practiced.

Gyan is like an academic counsellor in a great college who advises the student on the course he should select for himself after taking into consideration the student’s aptitude, interests and abilities. In this example, Bhakti is the course that the Gyan-counsellor advises the student, the spiritual aspirant, to take up in order to reach his goal, which is to attain God-realisation in this case.

Refer verse no. 24 herein below which says ‘merely having faith or belief in a deity or worshipping that deity with reverence is not true Bhakti though these virtues do constitute an important part of Bhakti like love, affection and devotion do’.]

१ / २ / ९ योगस्तूभयार्थमपेक्षणात् प्रयाजवत् ॥ १९ ॥

1 / 2 / 9 yōgastūbhayārthamapēkṣaṇāt prayājavat || 19||

(1/2/9) ‘Yoga’ (meditation; concentration of the mind; focusing one’s attention on some carefully chosen objective) is equally important for attainment of success in Gyan as well as in Bhakti as it helps the spiritual aspirant to concentrate his mind and focus his various faculties on the spiritual path and the objective he has chosen for himself. [This objective is God-realisation and attainment of spiritual bliss. Success in this spiritual endeavour gives liberation from the grossness associated with this mundane existence. The aspirant is able to have emancipation and salvation for his soul that gives him final beatitude and eternal peace.]

Though it is true that Yoga is a branch of Gyan (gnosis; metaphysics), but since Gyan itself is a means to Bhakti (which is the objective or aim of Gyan), it follows that Yoga too is a branch of Bhakti.

For instance, just as the ‘Prayaaja’ ceremony is a component part or a subsidiary ritual of a fire sacrifice (such as the horse-sacrifice and other such sacrifices) as well as of the ceremony of the Dikshaa (wherein the patron who would perform the sacrifice initiates himself into it and undertaking the vows needed to complete it), so too Yoga and Gyan are subsidiaries of Bhakti. To wit, both Yoga and Gyan help in the successful completion of Bhakti, and leads the spiritual aspirant to his desired spiritual objective. (19)

[How is Bhakti an aim or objective of Gyan as well as of Yoga? The main purpose of acquiring Gyan, say by deep study of the scriptures, is to make a spiritual aspirant become aware of the true nature and form of the Supreme Being as well as about the true purpose of life and the nature of this gross perishable world. Gyan motivates him to see that there is actually no peace in and nothing worthwhile to gain by pursuing

the sense objects of this world, and that true happiness and bliss is obtained by realisation of the ‘self’ which is pure consciousness. Gyan further enlightens him that his ‘self’ is a microcosmic form of the supreme ‘Self’ represented by the cosmic Consciousness. If one were to pursue this ‘consciousness’ and successfully come face-to-face with it then one would be able to access the fount of spiritual bliss and beatitude that is of an eternal and infinite nature. To wit, Gyan teaches the spiritual aspirant to seek God-realisation. It also teaches him the different ways this can be done.

The word ‘Yoga’ means to bring about a union between any two entities and make them compatible with each other. Yoga prescribes many practical ways by which a practitioner can control the different faculties of his mind and body so that their combined energy can be harnessed to achieve success in attaining one’s spiritual goal in life. In the realm of metaphysics and spiritualism, this goal is to bring about a union between the individual soul of the creature (the “Jiva”) and the Supreme Soul (the “Parmatma”; the supreme Brahm).

This is also the aim of Gyan (gnosis; metaphysical and theological knowledge; the knowledge of the scriptures) and Bhakti (devotion and love for the Lord God). They too help the aspirant to have self-realisation and attain God-realisation. Hence, all the three—Yoga, Gyan and Bhakti—can be said to be the three corners of an equilateral triangle. All of them are equally important, but Bhakti is like the apex of this triangle of which Gyan and Yoga are the base.

Just as Gyan alone cannot bestow bliss and beatitude as well as emancipation and salvation to the soul of the creature if it is not accompanied by Bhakti for the Lord so also Yoga that is devoid of Bhakti too fails to provide this blessing to the creature.

The objective of ‘Yoga’ is to bring about a union between two entities that have been separated due to some reason. Here, this union refers to the coming together of the individual’s soul and the supreme Soul of this creation—i.e. to bring the spiritual aspirant closer to his Lord God and make them embrace each other.

The aim of Bhakti is also the same. Bhakti too aims to bring the devotee closer to his beloved Lord. When Bhakti is mature and successful, the devotee experiences the spiritual ecstasy and bliss that comes with attainment of his beloved Lord God that is equivalent to the ecstasy and bliss of self-realisation as experienced by the ascetic who practices Yoga, or that obtained by Brahm-realisation by the person who follows the path of Gyan. The ultimate reward of eternal spiritual peace, bliss, beatitude and felicity, of liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation of the soul, are the same whichever path the spiritual aspirant chooses to follow.

But Bhakti is preferred over all other paths because it is hassle free and easy.

It is said in *Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇa*, 11/14/20 that: “For attaining me (the Supreme Lord) and thereby finding emancipation and beatitude, neither Yoga (meditation), nor Sankhya (a branch of scriptural knowledge), nor Dharma (righteousness), nor the study of Vedas (knowledge), nor Tapa (austerities; penances), nor Vairagya (renunciation) etc. would help if there is no Bhakti or deep and intense sense of love and devotion for me (in the heart of the creature).”

Lord Ram has praised Bhakti over Yoga and Tapa etc. in *Ram Charit Manas*, *Uttar Kand*, *Chaupai* line nos. 3-5 that precede *Doha* no. 85 when he told the crow-saint *Kaagbhusund*: “I am very pleased with you and your wisdom of choosing Bhakti over all other things. Indeed you are very lucky and blessed as you have asked for Bhakti which is so soothing and pleasant, but which even the exalted ascetics and sages do not easily want as they rather prefer to follow other difficult paths to me,

such as Japa (repetition of the God's name), Yoga (meditation), Tapa (severe penances) etc. which are all like scorching the body in fire."

It is said in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 4/20/16 that: "I am not known through Yaya, Tapa or Yoga, but I am reveal my brilliant form in the untainted heart of my devotee."

Similarly, in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 3/32/33 it is said that: "As the same milk with its various qualities or attributes is differently observed through different senses of the body, say through the eye one can see only its colour, through the touch of the skin one can feel its coolness or heat or feel its liquidity, through the tongue one can taste it, but the goodness that the milk contains is of any use only when it is actually drunk. Likewise, Karma (doing righteous deeds), Gyan (gnosis), Yoga (meditation) one may have partial view of the Lord, but it is only through pure Bhakti (love and devotion) that the full spiritual benefits of God-realisation can be had."

Just like Gyan (refer note appended to verse no. 15), 'Yoga' is also a subsidiary of Bhakti as it aids in the fulfilment of Bhakti. Gyan and Yoga are useful for those devotees who are intellectually mature and would like to have full knowledge of Bhakti, what it means, what is its aim, who is the Lord God who is to be worshipped and attained, what are the pitfalls and what precautions one should take, and all other such relevant questions before they embark on this spiritual journey. Being thus fully prepared, they easily attain success in Bhakti.]

१ / २ / १० गौण्या तु समाधिसिद्धिः ॥ २० ॥

1 / 2 / 10 gaunṛyā tu samādhisiddhiḥ || 20||

(1/2/10) Attainment of the eclectic state of 'Samadhi' (a trance-like state of transcendental existence) is a silent and subtle aspect of Bhakti, as it a natural accompaniment of success in Bhakti and plays a subsidiary role in its manifestation. Hence, Samadhi is a secondary form of Bhakti. Or it is a secondary symptom of Bhakti. (20)

[Samadhi is called a secondary form of Bhakti because it is merely a symptom of success in Bhakti. The bliss and ecstasy obtained by Bhakti may or may not lead to the trance-like state usually called Samadhi. A devotee may not attain Samadhi but still be deeply rooted in his love and devotion for the Lord God. The bliss and ecstasy of Samadhi obtained in Bhakti is experienced personally by the devotee just like it is experienced by an ascetic in the higher stages of Yoga (meditation).

'Samadhi' is a state that is reached in higher stages of Yoga. It refers to a state of transcendental existence when the ascetic rises above the sense perception of the gross material world and is unaware of his surroundings because he perpetually remains submerged or engrossed in contemplation and meditating on his 'self' which is pure consciousness, a stage that gives him an extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy. In the realm of Yoga, Samadhi is reached in the Turiya or the Turiyateet states of consciousness when only the pure consciousness prevails and the gross aspect of the body as well as the world cease to exist.

This also happens in the higher stages of Bhakti when the devotee becomes so lost in the thoughts of his beloved Lord God that he lives virtually aloof from the physical world in which his gross body lives. His 'self', i.e. his pure consciousness known as the Atma, is with the Lord God he loves, and so the presence of the body

becomes irrelevant for him for all practical purposes. To give an example, this was the condition of the Gopis of Vrindavan as clearly referred to in verse no. 14 and explained in the note appended to this verse.

Samadhi gives perpetual sense of spiritual bliss and ecstasy; it is a state when self-realisation is achieved; it is also a stage of God-realisation as nothing matters after that. Therefore it is said that when the stage of Samadhi is reached, Yoga is supposed to have reached its climax. Similarly, Bhakti is said to be mature when the devotee attains a state of Samadhi.

As we read on, we shall see that there are many other secondary forms of Bhakti—such as doing Kirtan (verse no. 63), auspicious deeds and offering them to the Lord God (verse nos. 64, 71), Japa (verse no. 61), Dhyān (verse no. 65), Padodak (i.e. offering water to wash the feet of the deity being worshipped—verse no. 67), Offerings of different kinds (verse no. 68, 70), and so on.]

१ /२ /११ हेया रागत्वादिति चेन्नोत्तमास्पदत्वात् सङ्गवत् ॥ २१ ॥

1 /2 /11 hēyā rāgatvāditi cēnnōttamāspadtvāt saṅgavat || 21||

(1/2/11) If it is said that since Bhakti is manifested in the form of ‘attachment to God’ (refer verse no. 2), and ‘attachment’ itself is not a good virtue as it leads to entanglement with the object of adoration, then this is a fallacious argument.

This is because here ‘attachment’ (“rāga”; in the case of Bhakti) is not with any gross thing like the material things of the world or objects of the senses, but this ‘attachment’ is to bring closeness between the individual soul, which is untainted and pristine pure consciousness, and the Supreme Soul represented by the Lord God who is an embodiment of cosmic Consciousness, of Truth, of bliss and beatitude.

When any two pristine pure and untainted entities unite to become one (as in the case of Bhakti which brings the devotee’s soul to the cosmic Soul so as to become one with it), it cannot be said to be equivalent to getting attracted to something that is gross and mundane as in the case of attachment to worldly things.#

[#This verse can also be read as follows: “Some say that since Bhakti has ‘attachment’ (to God) as its component, it is to be avoided as attachment is not an excellent spiritual virtue.” They put forth the argument given in Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali, verse no. 2/3 that says that attachment and infatuation are negative virtues; it’s like an affliction that is to be avoided. But there is a difference here—for this ‘attachment’ relates to the pure cosmic Consciousness that is untainted by application of any yardstick or criterion. This attachment in Bhakti is to have love and devotion for Lord God, and is therefore different from attachment as understood in the field of Gyan or Yoga where it refers to infatuation with the world and the sense organs. Hence, the difference is obvious and clear. The attachment in Bhakti is of a pure kind, while in Gyan and Yoga it surely has a negative connotation. The two cannot be equalled.”] (21)

[This verse clarifies the confusion surrounding the word ‘attachment’. Usually it has a negative connotation as it relates to being attracted to the gross world and its objects that appeal to the senses. This attachment leads to entanglements.

On the other hand, attachment with the Lord God creates an affinity and nearness between the devotee and the Lord. It forges a bond of love and affection

between the two. It ought to be noted that this is also the goal of Yoga and Gyan—to bring about a union of the individual’s soul with the Supreme Soul. So therefore, ‘attachment with God’ is different from ‘attachment with the world’.]

१ / २ / १२ तदेव कर्मिज्ञानियोगिभ्य आधिक्यशब्दात् ॥ २२ ॥

1 / 2 / 12 tadēva karmijñāniyōgibhya ādhikyaśabdāt || 22||

(1/2/12) Hence, it is established that a Bhakta (i.e. a person who follows the path of Bhakti, the devotion and love for the Lord God) is superior to a Karmi (a person who follows the path of doing meritorious deeds), or a Gyani (a person who acquires knowledge of the scriptures to become self and God realised) or a Yogi (an ascetic who follows the path of Yoga, the path of meditation and contemplation to attain God-realisation). (22)

[To wit, Bhakti is the best spiritual path to God-realisation. Even the Lord himself has endorsed the primacy and the supremacy of Bhakti over other paths such as Karma (doing righteous and meritorious deeds), Gyan (gnosis; acquisition of metaphysical and theological knowledge; study of the scriptures) and Yoga (meditation and contemplation). In the context of this verse, refer also to verse nos. 8 and 10.

This fact is reiterated in *Srimad Bhagvad Geeta*, 6/46-47 where Lord Krishna says: “A Yogi (a person who meditates and contemplates upon the Lord’s pure cosmic form as personified Consciousness, and remains ever so blissful and ecstatic in this remembrance of the Lord) is superior to a Karmi who does sacred activities without any self-realisation, even to a Gyani who has mere knowledge which he can’t put to use in self or God realisation, to a Tapaswi who suffers by doing severe penances only to ask for boons. And of all the Yogis, he who is completely ‘devoted to me alone’ is surely the best and absolutely the greatest amongst them all because he becomes united with me (which is the ultimate goal of all endeavours).”

Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 6/14/15 says: “Among the innumerable souls who have found Mukti (freedom from the world) or have attained Siddhi (mystical powers), rarely is found a true devotee of the Supreme Lord who loves him wholeheartedly (as a result of which he not only derives immense bliss and beatitude, but also gets emancipation and salvation).”]

१ / २ / १३ प्रश्ननिरूपणाभ्यामाधिक्यसिद्धेः ॥ २३ ॥

1 / 2 / 13 praśnanirūpaṇābhyāmādhikyasiddhēḥ || 23||

(1/2/13) The supremacy and primacy of Bhakti is also established by the questions asked by Arjun and the answers given by Lord Krishna (in the 12th Chapter of *Srimad Bhagvad Geeta*). (23)

[This is known as ‘Bhakti Yoga’. An English version of this entire chapter of *Geea* with detailed explanation has been included in a book titled ‘Bhakti’ penned by this author and published on-line in an e-book as well as a printed version.

Arjun asks Lord Krishna: “Out of those who constantly, faithfully and most devotedly worship your form that has attributes, and those who meditate upon your cosmic all-pervading form that has no attributes—of these two classes of worshippers, who is excellent and superior?”

Briefly, Lord Krishna’s answer is this: “My devotee who worships me with faith and his mind unwaveringly fixed on me, the Supreme Being, is the one who is best and well versed in the essence of Yoga (the primary aim of which is to focus the mind on the Absolute Truth, and to bring about a union between the individual creature’s soul and the Supreme Soul of the creation).

On the other hand, those who seek me by controlling their mind and their senses, by seeing me everywhere in my all-pervading form as pure consciousness, who seek me by meditating upon my form known as the supreme Brahm, a form of cosmic dimensions, a form that is too abstract to be understood, a form that is nameless, un-manifested, unthinkable, immutable and all-pervading, also attain me, but they encounter a lot of problems and troubles to reach me for this path is beset with dangers. Contemplation on an undefined and invisible form of Brahm is too difficult to practice for a creature who is accustomed to relating to entities he can see and experience in this world as is the case with my form that is visible and has attributes. For an embodied soul that the creature is, it is very difficult to comprehend the disembodied soul that my cosmic form is. Hence, meditation on my Nirguna form is very difficult, whereas meditation on my Saguna form is extremely easy.

Verily I say that those who single-mindedly worship me, are devoted and dedicated to me, are focused exclusively on me, who meditate and contemplate upon me, and who have placed their mind and themselves in my custody—I take special care of them and look after their welfare; I become their saviour and take them across the vast and fathomless ocean of birth and death.”]

१/२/१४ नैव श्रद्धा तु साधारण्यात् ॥ २४ ॥

1 / 2 / 14 naiva śraddhā tu sādharanyāt || 24||

(1/2/14) ‘Shraddha’ (meaning the virtues of faith, reverence, belief, conviction) is an excellent virtue and it should not be thought of in an ordinary sense or common way with respect to Bhakti. (24)

[‘Shraddha’ is indeed an excellent virtue, and it is an important component of Bhakti or devotion for Lord God. So it should not be applied to any ordinary or common purpose. It needs an equally excellent objective for its proper and correct application. This ‘excellent objective’ for a living being is attainment of liberation from the cycle of birth and death, attainment of emancipation and salvation for his soul, attainment of eternity, bliss and beatitude. And these eclectic spiritual objectives cannot be achieved if one applies the glorious virtue of ‘Shraddha’ to ordinary or common things of this world.

In the context of this verse, refer to verse no. 18 where it is said that offering worship to any sundry god or goddess or any ordinary deity is not the true form or purpose of Bhakti. Merely having faith or belief in a deity or worshipping that deity with reverence is not true Bhakti though these virtues do constitute an important part of Bhakti like love, affection and devotion do. In the same manner one may serve one’s worldly master or lord with due ‘Shraddha’, but this obviously is not Bhakti!

Only the Supreme Being can grant final liberation and deliverance to the soul of the creature from the cycle of birth and death. Other ordinary deities, no matter who they are, can fulfil other wishes of the worshipper, but they cannot deliver him from this cycle. Though the worshipper is devoted to these ordinary deities and may have full faith in them, though he may even love to worship these deities but he does not know or understand the true meaning and benefit of Bhakti. He is deluded and ignorant.

So therefore, though having 'Shraddha' is a common aspect of Bhakti and an important and crucial component of it for it to succeed and bear fruits, but it should be applied with due care and diligence; it is not to be applied to ordinary form of devotion but to its best form that is offered directly to the Supreme Being.

Merely having 'Shraddha' will not give the desired spiritual rewards in Bhakti, for one may have Shraddha for ordinary gods and goddesses, one may worship any common deity with due reverence and faith, but that is not true Bhakti, and therefore the reward is also not up to the mark. True Shraddha is when this glorious virtue is applied with respect to the Supreme Being.

We will note here that 'Shraddha' relates to the heart because faith, conviction, belief and reverence have their basic root in the heart as compared to the mind which is the seat of intelligence, logic, analysis and rational thinking. It is also in the heart where the Atma or the soul of the creature dwells. So therefore, Shraddha is also directly related to the welfare of the Atma, and since the Atma is the true 'self' of the creature, Shraddha is directly related to the creature's welfare.

To wit, 'Shraddha' is the first step towards Bhakti for the Lord God; hence it should not be treated as something ordinary or common. Its meaning and application should be properly understood to benefit from this excellent virtue as expounded herein above.

The next verse no. 25 further clarifies this concept of 'Shraddha' vis-à-vis 'Bhakti'.]

१ / २ / १५ तस्यां तत्त्वे चानवस्थानात् ॥ २५ ॥

1 / 2 / 15 tasyām tattvē cānavasthānāt || 25||

(1/2/15) Ordinary or common form of 'Shraddha' (as it is understood in its literal meaning) is different from its glorious form that leads to self-realisation and God-realisation, that makes a person realised and enlightened and firmly established in the Truth (i.e. in the pure Consciousness that is his true self as well as embodied in the form of the Supreme Being). (25)

[Refer to verse no. 24 with its note herein above that has clearly explained this point. The dictionary meaning of the word 'Shraddha' is faith, belief, conviction and reverence. One may have Shraddha towards one Guru (teacher), or any ordinary god or goddess, or his worldly master or lord. But that is not equivalent to having Bhakti for them.

One serves one's teacher, or sundry deities or worldly masters and lords such as a king or a boss, but all this service would at best fulfil his worldly needs and desires. None of them would liberate the soul from the miseries it has been suffering through the cycle of transmigration over countless generations. None would provide

the person eternal peace, bliss and beatitude. None would grant him emancipation and salvation.

So therefore, ‘Shraddha’ bears true fruit and is deemed to properly used only when it is applied in its correct sense and employed as a crucial component of ‘Bhakti’ as has been defined throughout these Sutras. Otherwise it goes in vain and is a futile exercise.

To wit, using Shraddha other than in the context of Bhakti is squarely undermining its spiritual value and importance. It would be a sacrilegious use of Shraddha if it is not employed with Bhakti for the Supreme Being.

The true value of the virtues of faith, conviction, belief and reverence, i.e. the virtue of ‘Shraddha’ that a person has is when these virtues are applied to the Supreme Being. True Bhakti (devotion and love) is one where Shraddha is directed to the Lord God in a selfless manner. Such a faithful and real devotee of the Lord is the most perfect among the accomplished Yogis, i.e. the ascetics who have successfully established oneness of their own self with the Supreme Self known as Brahm.

To know God, to have firm faith in him, to be whole-heartedly devoted to him—are indeed the steps that lead to spiritual perfection and God-realisation. This exalted state of existence makes a person realise that all his endeavours are directed to the Lord God and not to anyone else, that to realise the Lord and find oneness with him is his only goal of his life, and that the Lord God is the object worthy of his reverence and love. When this firmness of faith and conviction of purpose actually comes alive in a person then one can say that ‘Shraddha’ has truly revealed its pristine pure form in the heart of this person. Shraddha is a vital step for God-realisation, and therefore applying it for any other purpose is to demote Shraddha and give it ignominy.

To wit, Shraddha helps to create Bhakti; Shraddha cements the bond of love between the devotee and the Lords God.

It ought to be noted here that firm faith, conviction and belief are needed to succeed in any endeavour, whether it is related to the temporal world or to the spiritual world. If one is not fully convinced of the path he has chosen to reach his goal, if he is not firm in his resolve, if he is not convinced that the objective that he has chosen for himself is the best thing for him and it is actually attainable, if he has no faith in his own self and his ability to reach that goal, then he is more likely to fail than succeed in his endeavours. Uncertainty of mind and heart that indicates lack of faith, belief and conviction—or lack of Shraddha—leads to nowhere even in the temporal world where often it is observed that a person fails merely because he was not sure of what he was doing or what his goal is. If this situation is true for the world it surely is true in the spiritual realm as well. Hence the importance of Shraddha in Bhakti is to be properly understood.

The spiritual importance of Shraddha with relation to Bhakti has been succinctly highlighted in the Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 6/47, where Lord Krishna says: “Of all the Yogis, those who worship me with deep Shraddha for me in their Mana (mind and heart), are regarded as the best of all the Yogis by me.”]

१ / २ / १६ ब्रह्मकाण्डं तु भक्तौ तस्यानुज्ञानाय सामान्यात् ॥ २६ ॥

1 / 2 / 16 brahmakāṇḍam tu bhaktau tasyānujñānāya sāmānyāt || 26||

(1/2/16) The part of the scriptures that is known as ‘Brahm-Kand’ (*brahmakāṇḍam*), the chapters or sections that expound and elucidate upon the truth, the nature and the form of Brahm, the Supreme Being who is an embodiment of pure Consciousness, are actually meant to foster the virtue of Bhakti (devotion and affection) for him. Any knowledge of whatsoever kind it may be, if it does not teach this fundamental thing, i.e. if this spiritual knowledge is not gained by the study of the scriptures, than the whole purpose and intent of the scriptures goes to waste. (26)

[It is clear now that Bhakti for the Supreme Being known as Brahm is the sacrosanct and the ultimate purpose of the teaching of all the scriptures. Even though the same scriptures prescribe so many forms of worship and rituals, but their main purpose is to foster devotion for the Lord God and bring the creature closer to him so that ultimately the soul of the creature attains oneness with the Supreme Soul known as Brahm. If this goal is not achieved then all Gyan or acquisition of knowledge goes to waste.

It is commonly believed that imparting the knowledge of Brahm is the main purpose of the scriptures such as the Vedas and the Upanishads. But this is a fallacious interpretation, as their main intent is to bring about liberation and deliverance for the creature by enlightening him about Brahm and the true goal of life, to tell him how emancipation and salvation can be achieved, to show him the path to eternal bliss, felicity and beatitude. If this eclectic spiritual goal cannot be achieved by reading and studying about Brahm in the chapters of the scriptures that are commonly known as ‘Brahm-Kand’, then nothing is achieved. And this goal can only be achieved by having Bhakti for the Lord God. However, for Bhakti to mature and reach its natural destiny, Shraddha must be cultivated.

The Vedas are divided primarily into ‘Karma Kand’ or ‘Purva Mimaansa’ which deal with rituals, and ‘Gyan Kand’ or ‘Brahm-Kand’ or ‘Uttar Mimaansa’ which is about the knowledge of Brahm. The latter is usually called ‘Vedanta’ or the ‘Upanishad’. Though the Upanishads are intensively knowledge based, but it must be remembered that any knowledge is in vain if it cannot be applied in practice. So the knowledge of Brahm in the Brahm-Kand of the Vedas will be meaningful only if Brahm can be actually realised by the spiritual seeker, not in the theoretical form but in the practical form. And towards this end, Bhakti and Shraddha are necessary.

Now, who attains this perfect knowledge of Brahm? The answer is found in Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 4/39, which says: “He who is full of faith for me (Shraddha), he who is fully devoted to me and loves me (Bhakti), he who has learnt to control his senses (Jitendra), and he who diligently pursues true knowledge in this way (Gyan Tatparam), is surely able to attain the knowledge of the supreme Truth (represented by Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness and the Supreme Being), and thereby immediately attain supreme bliss and beatitude that naturally comes with it (with Brahm-realisation).”

So therefore, the ultimate purpose of all religious activities as prescribed in the Karma Kand of the Vedas is to attain Brahm. The Brahm-Kand tells the spiritual aspirant who Brahm is, but to actually reach this Brahm, the Supreme Being, the path prescribed is Bhakti along with Shraddha—i.e. to love the Supreme Being, to have devotion for him, to be fully committed to him, and to do it with full faith, belief and reverence for him.]

समाप्तश्च प्रथमोऽध्यायः ॥ १ ॥

samāptaśca prathamō 'dhyāyaḥ || 1||

Thus ends Canto no. 1

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Canto 2/ Part 1

द्वितीयोऽध्यायः

प्रथममाह्निकम्

dvitīyō 'dhyāyaḥ

prathamamāhnikam

२ / १ / १ बुद्धिहेतुप्रवृत्तिराविशुद्धेरवघातवत् ॥ २७ ॥

2 / 1 / 1 buddhihētupravṛttirāviśuddhēravaghātavat || 27||

(2/1/1) In order to gain full and correct knowledge it is necessary to keep the mind and the intellect (“Buddhi”) focused on it till the time the desired result is obtained just like it is necessary to keep threshing the harvested paddy till the grain is completely separated from the chaff*. (27)

[This is the practical way to learn something. Any student would experience the truth of this statement in his day-to-day life. To master any subject and become skilled in any craft, diligent practice is important. A subject may appear to be difficult in the beginning, but if one studies it with a focused mind and perseverance, if one applies his mind and intelligence to it, then success will be ultimately attained.

So therefore in one’s spiritual pursuit as well, concentration of the mind, steadfastness of faith and conviction, and commitment to one’s goal are of paramount importance.

Here, the ‘knowledge’ pertains to Brahm, the Supreme Being, and how the creature can attain Brahm-realisation and self-realisation so that he can obtain eternal peace, bliss and beatitude for himself, as well as attain liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death in this world that leads to the final emancipation and salvation of the soul. This knowledge is of two types—one that is shallow and of a worldly kind, and the other that is deep and far-reaching from the spiritual perspective. The former knowledge is concerned with the performance of many rites and rituals aimed at fulfilment of worldly desires, while the latter knowledge pertains to the soul and its liberation from the world.

The true value of the knowledge of the scriptures lies in what real gain it gives to the person from the long-term perspective of his spiritual destiny, and not one that

gives short-term worldly gains. But in both the cases however, intelligent application of the mind is imperative. If the scriptures are studied intelligently and analytically, a person is easily able to gain insight into them and realise that their main aim and purpose is not worldly gain but to provide the creature spiritual blessedness.

This spiritual knowledge contained in the scriptures can be gained by thoroughly studying them, discussing them in detail with others who are well-versed in this knowledge, observing saints and sages to see how this knowledge is being put to practice by them and the gain they derive from it, then personally contemplating upon this knowledge deeply, with the application of a focused mind and intellect, to arrive at the essence and the truth. Once this knowledge is gained in a proper way by a wise aspirant, he would practice it himself with full faith, devotion and commitment.

All the rituals and the knowledge of the scriptures should be pursued only till the time one does not know the true spiritual goal of his life and how to reach it. Once this knowledge dawns upon him, these rituals and knowledge become redundant for him. At this time only pure and untainted love and devotion for the Lord God remains in his heart. After all, this is the ultimate aim of performing all the rituals and having the knowledge of Brahm as contained in the scriptures.

It is said in the Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇ, 11/20/67 and 11/20/9: “I have prescribed three types of Yogas in the Vedas, viz. Gyan Yoga, Karma Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. There is no fourth type of Yoga. So long as one does not develop devotion for me with due faith and reverence, all the rituals and ceremonies and deeds and knowledge go in vain.”

The reference to the threshing of the paddy vis-à-vis the study of the scriptures means that one should strive to understand their essence by adopting different means, such as self-study, discussion with wise ones, application of mind on the teaching of the scriptures and deeply contemplating on their purport.

*This instance of the husking of the harvested crop so that the grain can be separated from the chaff by threshing the paddy is also given in the Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇ, 10/14/4 which says: “Those who abandon the path of undiluted devotion for the holy feet of the Lord God who is the source of all well-being and true welfare, and instead labour to have abstract knowledge of Brahm (i.e. pursue the path of Gyan) for the sake of acquisition of the knowledge alone, they are toiling in vain like those foolish people who pound empty husk in an attempt to extract grain from it because in their ignorance they do not know that the grain has already been removed from it.”]

२ /१ /२ तदङ्गानां च ॥ २८॥

2 /1 /2 tadaṅgānāṁ ca || 28||

(2/1/2) The different branches of scriptural (spiritual) knowledge and the various paths or means prescribed to have this knowledge should be diligently pursued till the time one has acquired perfection, and Truth that is free from all doubts and delusions has been understood. That should be the aim of knowledge and the various paths prescribed to gain it. [Otherwise, it is a futile exercise.] (28)

[This verse is an extension of the idea expressed in the previous verse no. 27. All the effort made and the energy and time spent in the studying of the scriptures is deemed to be well-spent if the person gains something worthwhile by it. And the only worthy

gain that an aspirant has by this endeavour is to be enlightened about the true nature of his 'self' as well as its relationship with the 'Supreme Self'.

To wit, the real gain of scriptural study and pursuing different paths as prescribed by them is to attain self-realisation and God-realisation, which means that the aspirant understands that the ultimate goal of his study is to learn how to attain oneness with the Supreme Being so that eternal bliss and beatitude can be achieved. He further realises that basically there is no difference between his 'self' known as the Atma which is pure consciousness, and the 'Supreme Self' known as the Parmatma who embodies the cosmic Consciousness. Since there is a natural affinity between the two, only a little effort on the part of the aspirant would fulfil his wishes. He realises that there is actually no need for elaborate rituals or pursuing so many tedious paths as this ultimate goal—i.e. to bring about oneness of the individual soul with the supreme Soul can easily be done by the path of Bhakti. This understanding removes all sense of misery and grief from the inner-self of the spiritual aspirant, fills him with confidence and delight, and he steadfastly moves ahead to attain eternal blessedness. After all, this is the true and real message of the voluminous scriptures. If this is not understood and implemented, nothing is gained by pursuing these scriptures, or doing countless rituals, or keeping endless vows, or observing sacraments, or performing ceremonies, or keeping religious observances.

This verse basically means that all such things are merely branches and offshoots of the main Tree of Knowledge. One must strive to understand the spiritual Truth that is borne in the form of a divine fruit by this tree, instead of wasting the energy of his mind and the effort of his body in trying to understand about the many branches and offshoots of this huge tree.

And this divine fruit of self-and-God-realisation is easily had by following the path of Bhakti. So a wise man would focus his mind to know what Bhakti is, and how it should be practiced. All the other paths are subservient to Bhakti; they are subsidiaries of Bhakti. If there is no Bhakti then none of these many paths to attain blessedness and God-realisation would bear a ripe fruit.]

२ / १ / ३ तामैश्वर्यपरां काश्यपः परत्वात् ॥ २९ ॥

2 / 1 / 3 tāmāśvāryaparāṁ kāśyapaḥ paratvāt || 29||

(2/1/3) The great sage Kashyap (kāśyapaḥ) was of the eclectic view that only when the mind and the intellect are directed towards understanding of the Transcendental Supreme Truth (paratvāt), it is only then that the seeker is able to attain the supreme form of blessedness and eternity of peace, bliss and beatitude. This knowledge gives emancipation and salvation, known as 'Moksha', to the creature. (29)

[To wit, only when the creature focuses his mind and the intellect on the cosmic Consciousness will he be able to understand about it just like any other subject of study that needs full and devoted application of the mind and the intellect.

There are countless branches of knowledge even in our physical world, and one has to diligently pursue a particular subject or branch of knowledge that he has chosen to study to make a career of it for himself. Once he makes this selection, he has to remain focused on his chosen path and goal. If the limited time that he has at his disposal is not properly used, or if he fails to make a wise decision, then his life and time and energy are wasted away.

The same thing applies in the spiritual realm. The wisest person is one who sets his mind on the main objective of his life—which is to gain true knowledge that would set his soul free from the cycle of transmigration and give him eternal peace, bliss and beatitude. So he concertedly applies his mind and intellect to learn and know about the ‘supreme Truth’ that will help him attain this objective.

This is what sage Kashyap advised. He said that a wise spiritual aspirant is he who applies the faculty of the mind and the intellect to have the knowledge of the supreme transcendental Truth, and the cause of his miseries and torments. What is this ‘Truth’ and ‘what is the cause of misery’?

The ‘Truth’ is that the ‘self’ of the individual creature is not his gross body but it is the Atma that is pure consciousness, that this Atma is the same as the Supreme Atma known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Being, and that true peace, bliss and beatitude is obtained only when the Atma understands its likeness and natural bond and affinity with the Parmatma, its parent, and ultimately becomes one with it. Since the Atma and the Parmatma are the same and both are inherently blissful, enlightened and eternal, the cause of all miseries and torments of the creature is that he does not understand this eternal Truth but remains mired in delusions and ignorance. Sage Kashyap advises the creature to learn this Absolute Truth, and become eternally blissful and blessed. He says that this is the real objective of the knowledge of the scriptures.

It will be noted here that sage Kashyap was of the view that there are two entities, i.e. the individual creature and his Atma, and the Parmatma or the Supreme Atma. Lack of truthful knowledge about the uniformity between the two, and that this knowledge is transcendental in nature, is the cause of worldly torments.]

२ / १ / ४ आत्मैकपरां बादरायणः ॥ ३० ॥

2 / 1 / 4 ātmaikaparāṁ bādarāyaṇaḥ || 30||

(2/1/4) [Sage Veda Vyas, also known as Baadaraayan, has a slightly different view on this subject, though primarily the two views of Veda Vyas and Kashyap are the same.]

The learned sage Veda Vyas (known as “bādarāyaṇ”) says that the mind and the intellect that is focused on the Atma (which is the true ‘self’ of the living being and pure consciousness personified) is the one that leads to final attainment of bliss and beatitude. (30)

[Sage Veda Vyas had penned the Upanishads which are said to be repositories of knowledge of the essence of the Vedas. They are also called ‘Vedanta’ because they teach the ultimate knowledge that is to be gained by the study of the Vedas, knowledge without which the study of the Vedas is useless.

And what does Veda Vyas teach? He teaches that the individual creature’s ‘true self’ is not his gross perishable body, but it is the Atma. This Atma is pure consciousness personified; it is an eternal entity that is enlightened, wise and blissful. This Atma is the same as the cosmic Atma or the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. The creature suffers because he does not know this spiritual Truth. If he becomes aware of this Truth, i.e. if he becomes self-realised, then Brahm-realisation is automatically attained, and with it comes eternal bliss, beatitude and blessedness. This realisation also leads to liberation and deliverance from the delusions and

ignorance that bind the creature to this world, and this translates into ultimate emancipation and salvation of the soul that is known as Moksha.

The difference between the views of Veda Vyas and Kashyap is evident, but it is only very slight in its essence. While Veda Vyas treats self-realisation as the main goal of spiritual knowledge that provides eternity and bliss, Kashyap advises Brahm-realisation for this purpose. Examined carefully though, we will see that basically there is no difference between the two views as they both stress that spiritual beatitude and bliss are attained when the creature realises the truth of his ‘self’ as pure transcendental consciousness that is separate from his gross body, and the fact that it is the same as the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. Hence, bringing unification between the two leads to final liberation and deliverance of the creature from the miseries and torments associated with this mortal world of transmigration where out of ignorance and delusions the Jiva, the living being, thinks he is separate from Brahm, the Supreme Being.

So therefore, while sage Kashyap is of the view that the mind and the intellect should be applied to understanding the spiritual truth of the ‘self’ as well as the ‘Supreme Self’ as they are two entities, Veda Vyas is of the view that understanding of the true nature of the ‘self’ is sufficient in itself as there is no difference between this ‘self’ and the ‘Supreme Self’ as they are both the same transcendental cosmic Consciousness.

When applied to the spiritual concept of Bhakti, Veda Vyas’ view is more relevant because it applies directly to the heart where the soul lives. Bhakti is also directly related to the heart as it primarily consists of love and devotion for the Lord God.

Secondly, Bhakti recognises that there is only one supreme spiritual goal in life, which is to have single-minded devotion for the Lord God, like the view of Veda Vyas who says that there is only one goal of knowledge and it is to know about the truth of the Atma.

From this perspective, the view of sage Kashyap is slightly at variance with the concept of Bhakti because Kashyap applies the mind and the intellect to study two entities, viz. the Atma and the Parmatma, while Bhakti advises concentration on only one entity known as the Parmatma.

Refer: Brahm-Sutra, 4/1/3 which says: “A wise one endeavours to realise the Atma which is supreme pure consciousness.”]

२ / १ / ५ उभयपरां शाण्डिल्यः शब्दोपपत्तिभ्याम् ॥ ३१ ॥

2 / 1 / 5 ubhayaparām śāṇḍilyaḥ śabdōpapattibhyām || 31||

(2/1/5) Sage Shandilya reconciles the two views (of Kashyap and Veda Vyas) and is of the opinion that the mind and the intellect that relies on the Truth envisioned in the words of the Vedas and properly interprets them to understand about Brahm (the Supreme Being representing the transcendental cosmic Consciousness) and the Jiva (the individual creature and his true self which is also pure consciousness)—it is such mind and intellect that leads the creature to emancipation and salvation, and provides him with eternal bliss, beatitude and blessedness.

[This verse can also be read as follows: Sage Shandilya says that emancipation and salvation can be attained by both the paths, i.e. by focusing on the ‘self’ as well as on the ‘Brahm’. This is because both represent the same eternal Truth that is cosmic

transcendental Consciousness. So therefore, true knowledge is one that leads to self-realisation or Brahm-realisation, whether it is obtained by the study of the scriptures or got from other sources because both have the same effect, and both provide eternal bliss and beatitude to the spiritual aspirant.] (31)

[Sage Shandilya says that the scriptures should not be neglected, but they should be properly and correctly interpreted and understood. Since the Truth is that the Consciousness is an immutable, all-pervading and eternal entity, it follows that whether it is studied at its microcosmic level as the individual creature and his Atma or at the macrocosmic level as Brahm known as the Parmatma, the same thing is being studied and understood. So where is the cause of difference and dichotomy in it? To say that the living being's Atma is separate or different from the Supreme Atma in the form of Brahm is absolutely wrong and fallacious.

So proper application of the mind and the intellect removes all doubts and confusions regarding whom to have Bhakti for, whom to worship and be devoted to. Because a wise man would understand that by having Bhakti for his beloved Lord God he is actually worshipping Brahm as prescribed in the scriptures such as the Vedas or the Upanishads.

To wit, Bhakti leads a wise and enlightened devotee to Brahm-realisation and self-realisation that gives liberation and deliverance to the soul as envisioned in the Vedas and the Upanishads. The chief aim of the study of these scriptures is achieved if one understands the true nature of Bhakti, as well as that of the Atma and the Parmatma. This is what Shandilya says. In this way, he has reconciled the views of Veda Vyas and Kashyap.

In effect sage Shandilya says that since Bhakti brings about a union between the Atma and the Parmatma, it bridges the views of sage Kashyap and sage Veda Vyas.

Refer: The Chandogya Upanishad, 3/14/1-4 that endorses this view. It says: "Brahm is one and one alone. There is no parallel to Brahm. So a man with intuitive wisdom should worship him (Brahm) alone. The reward that one gets is in accordance with the effort one makes for it. If the spiritual endeavour is directed to Brahm then the spiritual reward is also Brahm-realisation that leads to emancipation and salvation of the soul. For one must remember the truth that 'he' (Brahm) is the cause of everything, is the one who fulfils all wishes, is the divine Supreme Being who is transcendental, blissful, glorious and all-pervading. It is this Brahm that I worship and devote myself to attain eternal bliss and beatitude."]

२ / १ / ६ वैषम्यादसिद्धमिति चेन्नाभिज्ञानवदवैशिष्ट्यात् ॥ ३२ ॥

2 / 1 / 6 vaiṣamyādasiddhamiti cēnnābhijñānavadavaiśiṣṭyāt || 32||

(1/2/6) Though it appears that the Jiva (the living being; the creature) is different from Brahm (the Supreme Being) but this is a wrong understanding of the two. It is because they represent the same pure consciousness that exists at two levels of creation, the Jiva being a revelation of it at the microcosmic level of creation, and Brahm being its revelation at the macrocosmic level.

Since all that is 'true' is nothing but pure transcendental Consciousness that has revealed itself in all these forms, it follows that the Jiva is also a manifested form

of Brahm. This is the Absolute Truth. [And, this is also the unequivocal Truth expounded and enunciated by the Upanishads.] (32)

[The truthful nature of the Jiva is his Atma which is pure consciousness. This Atma is his true 'self', the soul of all living beings. It is also the same as the transcendental Consciousness that pervades in this creation as the eternal entity known as the supreme Brahm who is omnipresent, omnipotent, blissful and glorious. Brahm is the Soul of this creation, and therefore it is also revealed as the soul or the Atma of all living beings. This being the case, there is no difference either between any two Jivas or between the Jiva and Brahm. This is the considered view of sage Shandilya as well as of the Upanishads. It is established by the spiritual truth that the Atma is one and without a second.

The Upanishads unequivocally and unanimously endorse this philosophy. For instance, in the Sam Veda's Chandogya Upanishad, 3/14/1 it is said: "Brahm is one and one alone. There is no parallel or second to Brahm".

Similarly, Chandogya Upanishad, 4/8/7 says: "Tattwamasi"—i.e. Thou (the spiritual seeker's true self) art That (the supreme Brahm symbolising cosmic Consciousness)". This is one of the Great Sayings of the Upanishads, known as the 'Mahavakyas'.

Again, Chandogya Upanishad, 6/2/1 says: "There is only One who is without a second or a parallel."

In Shukla Yajur Veda's Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 4/4/19 it is said: "There is no duality anywhere in the creation as it is all pure consciousness".

"Aham Brahmasmi"—'I am Brahm': so says the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 1/4/10. This also is one of the Mahavakyas.

"Brahm is the nectar of bliss and beatitude for all the living beings in the form of their Atma"—Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 2/5/14.

It is said in Rig Veda's Aiteriya Upanishad, 3/1/1: "Truthful knowledge, true wisdom and true enlightenment are all personified forms of Brahm".

Krishna Yajur Veda's Taittiriya Upanishad, 2/1 says: "The knowledge of Brahm or Brahm-realisation is the supreme knowledge. Brahm is the Truth, he is knowledge and enlightenment personified, and he is eternal and infinite."

The Krishna Yajur Veda's Katha Upanishad, 2/2/13 says: "Those persons who are really wise behold the supreme Brahm with full devotion as the supreme Reality and Truth of existence."

So therefore, from the perspective of the scriptures and the enlightened view of sage Shandilya, Bhakti is to focus the mind for Brahm-realisation, and to serve and have devotion for none but the supreme Brahm.

We observe that in this verse sage Shandilya has addressed the primary question: "To whom should one offer his worship; who is the God to whom Bhakti is to be offered?" His answer is based on the intelligent interpretation of the Vedas and the Upanishads, and it is that: "Bhakti should be offered to Brahm, the Supreme Being; it is Brahm alone who is to be worshipped; it is realisation of this Brahm that is the real aim of all spiritual practices, including that of Bhakti."]

२ / १ / ७ न च क्लिष्टः परः स्यादनन्तरं विशेषात् ॥ ३३ ॥

2 / 1 / 7 na ca klišṭaḥ paraḥ syādanantaram viśēṣāt || 33||

(2/1/7) The Jiva (i.e. the living being, the creature) is subjected to great worldly pain, grief, miseries and torments because it has not understood the real nature of its own 'self'. This 'self' is pure consciousness that is also the nature of the Supreme Self known as Brahm, the Supreme Being, who is an embodiment of eternal bliss and beatitude. So therefore, as long as this realisation does not dawn upon the creature because he is deluded and ignorant, he remains engulfed in all sorts of miseries and torments, which however vanish on their own upon realisation of the 'self'. (33)

[The previous verses have already expounded upon this spiritual principle. The creature's 'self' is his Atma which is pure consciousness and eternally blissful. Therefore the cause of all his miseries and torments is obviously his ignorance of this fact. So as soon as one develops understanding of the Supreme Being, the Lord God, and realises that his Atma is directly related to the Supreme Lord, then all miseries vanish automatically. This is the aim and purpose of Bhakti. It brings about oneness between the individual Atma of the creature and the Supreme Atma known as the Lord God; it helps to merge the microcosmic consciousness represented by the individual's Atma with its cosmic form known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma that is eternal and blissful.

Now the question arises, "if the Atma and the Parmatma are one, then why does the creature suffer so much unease and problems; why does he not find peace and bliss?" The answer is that the creature is deluded and is so ignorant that he does not know this fact. This delusion and ignorance can be removed by an intelligent study of the scriptures as indicated in verse no. 27.

In the Katha Upanishad, 2/2/13 it is said: "The person of wisdom who understands that the supreme Brahm is the only Truth and paramount eternal Reality in this creation, that Brahm is the fountain-head of bliss and the primary Consciousness that has revealed itself as the Atma residing inside all living beings as their 'self', and that this Brahm not only controls the creature from within his own self by the virtue of being the prime deity who resides as inside him as his Atma but also rewards him in accordance with his deeds—verily indeed, such a person attains eternal peace and bliss; no one who is ignorant of this fact about Brahm and his own 'self' ever attains peace and bliss."

So therefore, a wise and intelligent person develops steady devotion for Brahm, and he never turns back from this path that provides him eternal bliss and peace—refer: Taitteriya Upanishad, 2/8.]

२/१/८ ऐश्वर्यं तथेति चेन्न स्वाभाव्यात् ॥ ३४ ॥

2 / 1 / 8 aiśvaryam tathēti cēna svābhāvyāt || 34||

(2/1/8) Supernatural and majestic powers, infinite glories, holiness and divinity (aiśvaryam) are an integral quality or virtue of the cosmic Consciousness, and these virtues cannot be separated from it as they are natural to it. [Refer also to verse no. 35.]

The creature does not exhibit these virtues or divine powers, even though it is said that his true self is pure consciousness, as he is ignorant of the nature of his 'true self' because of which he regards himself as different or separate from the Supreme Self which is represented by the cosmic Consciousness. (34)

[This verse explains why the creature is so diminutive and why he suffers in this world inspite of the fact that his 'self' is a personified form of cosmic consciousness that is all-powerful and possesses infinite glories and divinity. The answer is that the creature has not known who is 'true self' actually is. Had he known this, he would be like the supreme Brahm himself.

To wit, this is the purpose of Bhakti—to enable the individual creature realise Brahm and acquire the glories so characteristic of Brahm, i.e. to become eternally blissful, and to be liberated from ignorance and delusions. Just like Brahm, an enlightened and God-realised devotee becomes powerful enough to easily overcome all miseries and torments associated with this mortal gross world of transmigration even as he attains eternity and beatitude.

Till the time the person becomes God-realised, the grand characteristics of the divinity, holiness and glories of the Atma, the natural tendency of the Atma to be blissful, enlightened and happy, remain dormant and hidden within him.

It can be argued that if the whole creation is a manifested form of Brahm, then the pain, miseries and torments that make the Atma suffer also affect Brahm. This is a fallacious argument because though these negative elements exist in Brahm along with all the positive elements, they do not affect him just like the case of heat being inherently present in the fire element but the fire never feels tormented by its own heat.

Just like the natural brilliance of the sun is not affected by its dull image reflected from a dirty mirror, the glories of Brahm are not affected by the dullness that the Atma is subjected to because of the delusions and ignorance that dominate a creature.

The next verse no. 35 further elaborates on this principle.]

२ / १ / ९ अप्रतिषिद्धं परैश्वर्यं तद्भावाच्च नैवमितरेषाम् ॥ ३५ ॥

2 / 1 / 9 apratiṣiddham paraiśvaryaṁ tadbhāvācca naivamitarēṣām || 35||

(2/1/9) Nowhere in the scriptures has it been said that the Supreme Being lacks in any kind of divinity, holiness, majestic powers and other glorious virtues, as these are his natural and inherent qualities.

Since the primary form of the Jiva (i.e. the true self of the living being in the form of his Atma) is the same as the Supreme Being (because they both represent pure consciousness), it follows that the former (i.e. the Jiva) also does not lack in any of the divine virtues. They are also integral to him. (35)

[Though the many divine virtues are an integral part of all Jivas, the living beings, yet they are subjected to modifications due the degree of ignorance and delusions that dominate the Jiva because of which he finds himself separated from the Supreme Being. By having Bhakti, which establishes oneness between the Jiva and the Supreme Being, this disparity or difference is removed. Then Jiva comes to experience the spark of divinity and holiness that are naturally present inside him. This would fill him with eternal joy and bliss.

Hence, the Jiva is able to overcome miseries and pain, and instead attain bliss and beatitude by following the path of Bhakti.

The Chandogya Upanishad, 8/3/4 says: "When the Jiva rises above his gross body, it is then he realises his true transcendental self."]

२ / १ / १० सर्वानृते किमिति चेन्नैवम्बुद्ध्यनन्त्यात् ॥ ३६ ॥

2 / 1 / 10 sarvānṛtē kimiti cēnnaivambuddhyānāntyāt || 36||

(2/1/10) If it is said that one can find complete freedom (liberation, emancipation of the soul) by getting rid of (spiritual) delusions, then this is not practically feasible because the Buddhi (mind and intellect) is infinite, and so if one is able to overcome the delusions under one given situation, others take hold of him in another situation. This is because the Buddhi would look and interpret the second situation differently from the first situation. (36)

[That is why even the wisest of men fall prey to delusions and go astray from their spiritual path. This is also why one needs to constantly study the scriptures and practice Bhakti diligently so that he is able to counter the confusions and doubts that the Buddhi continues to create for him.

For instance, the person may be convinced about the falsehood of the charms of the material world and is assured that true happiness comes by renouncing it. Then his mind and intellect pesters him that the knowledge about the Atma etc. are too abstract to be of any practical value, so he must rather enjoy the practical world instead of pursuing an abstract idea. The person begins to falter in his spiritual beliefs, and it would be ruinous for him if he does not recover in time. So herein comes the necessity of constant study of the scriptures and practice of Bhakti which together help him overcome the constant pestering of the Buddhi which tries to make him look rationale and secular and modern in his outlook by neglecting his spiritual pursuit and instead follow the path of the material world.

This is the meaning of this verse. The mind is not constant; it keeps on changing and interpreting things differently. That is why control of the mind has been prescribed in the Upanishads as a necessary step towards self-realisation and final liberation.

To wit, those who are atheists in heart though pretending to be ethical in word and deed, those who read the Vedas well but disparage the Lord God by not accepting him and his existence, those who are arrogant, insolent and demoniac by nature inspite of studying the scriptures as they have not cultivated the glorious virtues of humility and piety taught by them—it is sure that these people can never find emancipation and salvation for themselves as their mind and intellect have been hijacked by delusions.]

२ / १ / ११ प्रकृत्यन्तरालादवैकार्यं चित्सत्त्वेनानुवर्तमानात् ॥ ३७ ॥

2 / 1 / 11 prakṛtyantarālādavaikāryaṁ citsattvēnānuvartamānāt || 37||

(2/1/11) The Supreme Being employs his delusion-creating powers (known as 'Maya', and which is one of his many powers) to create Prakriti (physical world; Nature). So to imagine that the Supreme Being has lost his characteristics of being invisible, infinite, immutable, indivisible and constant just because he has created this world that is visible, finite, ever-changing and perishable, is a wrong proposition. (37)

[The Supreme Being known as Brahm used his delusion-creating powers to create a physical world that is so different from the unique characteristic qualities of its creator even though the scriptures say that the world (Prakriti) is a revelation of Brahm, that everything in existence is nothing but Brahm, that Brahm created this world and the Jiva, the living being who came to live in this world, in his own likeness.

Nothing appears to be ‘in likeness’ between Brahm and either the Jiva or the world—for while Brahm is sublime, subtle, invisible, immutable, infinite and eternal, both the Jiva and the world are gross, visible, changeable, perishable and finite. The reason is that Brahm created this world by employing his Maya, his delusion-creating powers which are one of his countless majestic powers.

Therefore, inspite of this Prakriti (world and Jiva) being corrupted by so many negative qualities it does not mean that Brahm is also corrupted.

Since Brahm had initiated the process of creation, it is said that he is the ‘creator’ or the ‘doer of deed’ that resulted in the production of this creation. But Brahm is free from his creation and its taints, so inspite of being the ‘doer of a deed’ (that resulted in this creation), he is free from its negative effects.

Now a question arises: If everything is created by Maya or delusions, and not by Brahm, then why is it said in the scriptures that all that exists is Brahm, and it is Brahm that is established in creation? The next verse no. 38 answers this question.]

२/१/१२ तत्प्रतिष्ठा गृहपीठवत् ॥ ३८ ॥

2 / 1 / 12 tatpratiṣṭhā gr̥hapīṭhavat || 38||

(2/1/12) [Since Prakriti, Nature, owes its origin directly to Maya as said in the previous verse no. 37, then why is it said that everything that exists has its origin in Brahm, the Supreme Being who is a personified form of the cosmic Consciousness? This question is addressed now.]

Since the origin of Maya as well as Prakriti can be traced back to Brahm, there is no wrong in concluding that owe their origin ultimately to Brahm; that they are ultimately established in ‘that’ (i.e. Brahm) which lends them their validity, authority and authenticity (tatpratiṣṭhā).

It is like the case of a man seated on a stool in his home (gr̥hapīṭhavat)—here it is always said that the man is sitting in his home, and not on a stool. (38)

[This example is self-explanatory. When we want to know where a person is, we are told ‘he is in his home’. If we enquire further and wish to be specific as to where inside the home he exactly is then we are told ‘he is sitting on a chair or a stool inside his home’. Now this stool or chair on which the person is sitting are also a part of his home, and they can be shifted anywhere inside the building, but we still say that the person is ‘sitting on a stool or a chair in his home’.

Likewise, this creation or Prakriti can have its origin in anything related to Brahm, it may be Maya or any other virtue of Brahm, but still the primary source of its coming into existence is Brahm and Brahm alone, and nothing else. It is Brahm’s prerogative to decide what he will use to create Prakriti. Hence it is said that this creation that is revealed as Prakriti or Nature has its ultimate seat in Brahm.

Just as we do not separate the stool or the chair from the home while being told where the person is, so likewise we do not treat Maya and Brahm separately while learning where Prakriti (Nature) and its Jivas (the living beings who inhabit this creation) have their root or origin. We identify their seat as Brahm.

Again, just as a spider creates and withdraws its web without any effort, so also this world proceeds forth from Brahm and falls back in Brahm. Another example is this: Just as hairs grow unconsciously from the body of a conscious man without his even being aware of the creation of hairs, and these hairs fall off from his body again without his being aware of this happening, and in due course of time new hairs grow afresh again without the man being aware of it, similar is the case with Brahm vis-à-vis the Prakriti (Nature) and its inhabitants known as the Jivas (living beings) who are created and destructed continuously in a rhythmic cycle of creation and destruction without Brahm being involved in it. And just as we say that it is the spider's web or a particular man's hair, so we say that the Prakriti and the Jiva have their origin in Brahm.

Further, the spider's web and the hairs of a man will have their respective genes or DNA in them, so likewise the Prakriti and the Jiva have the 'genes' of Brahm in them. So it is said that Brahm dwells in all the units of creation, animate or inanimate. Refer: Chapter 6 of the Chandogya Upanishad of Sam Veda.

Lord Krishna says in Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 9/10 that: "Prakriti or Nature, propelled by me—i.e. under my instructions and supervision, gives birth to this universe which consists of both animate as well as inanimate beings. It is in this way that the wheel of creation goes on and on."

It is said in the Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇa, 4/11/17 that: "It is due to the Supreme Being that the universe, made up of a system consisting of a cause and its effect, ever remains in a state of flux just as iron pieces are set in motion by the presence of a magnet."

Aiteriya Upanishad of the Rig Veda tradition describes the process of creation. It goes on to say that Brahm, after having initiated the process of creation, wondered as to how he would control the monster he has self-created. So he decided to enter his creation and control it from within. Refer: Aiteriya Upanishad, 1/1/1—1/3/14.

The entire Shvetashvatara Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition is dedicated to the theme of how this creation is established in Brahm. An elaborate English version of this great Upanishad has been published by this author along with other Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda in his series on all the 108 Upanishads classified according to their respective Vedas.]

२/१/१३ मिथोऽपेक्षणादुभयम् ॥ ३९॥

2 / 1 / 13 mithō 'pēkṣaṇādubhayam || 39||

(2/1/13) Therefore we conclude that both Brahm and Maya play a role in creation. Hence, both can be said to be the cause of Prakriti (Nature; creation), and this statement will not contradict anything said.

There is another way of interpreting this verse as follows: Neither Maya nor Prakriti, or Prakriti and Jiva, are able to independently do anything without the overall command and supervision of Brahm—because they have their source of authority in Brahm. It is from Brahm that these two units of creation derive their powers and authority, both at the macro level as well as the micro level of existence. (39)

[Brahm represents pure ‘consciousness’, and it is this ‘consciousness’ that does anything at all at any given level of creation. It is very obvious—because a ‘dead and lifeless’ entity—i.e. that which does not have ‘consciousness’ or ‘the fundamental element or the spark of life’ in it, won’t do anything even if it tries to do it.

Taittiriya Upanishad, 2/7/1 says: “For who indeed would be able to breathe and remain alive if Brahm, who is eternal and blissful consciousness, does not remain present as the supervisor having its seat in the soul or the Atma of the creature?”

Lord Krishna says in Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 9/10 that: “Prakriti or Nature, propelled by me—i.e. under my instructions and supervision, gives birth to this universe which consists of both animate as well as inanimate beings. It is in this way that the wheel of creation goes on and on.”

This verse no. 39 brings to the conclusion the arguments put forward in verse nos. 37-38.

The next verse no. 40 elaborates on this theme by saying that besides Brahm and Prakriti, or Brahm (Parmatma) and Jiva, there is no other third element. There is the ‘cause’ in the form of Brahm, and there is the ‘effect’ in the form of Prakriti, there is the Parmatma from whom the Jiva was born, and there is nothing besides it. So they depend upon each other. Still, Prakriti depends upon Brahm, and Jiva upon Parmatma as the latter is the progenitor of the former.]

२/११४ चेत्याचितोर्न तृतीयम् ॥ ४० ॥

2 / 1 14 cētyācitōrna tr̥tīyam || 40||

(2/1/14) Other than the pure consciousness (which is the cause of everything in this universe) and the revelation of this consciousness (which is the effect of it in the form of creation of this universe, the material world), there is no third element.

To wit, there is no third element (na tr̥tīyam) other than Brahm (“cīta”—i.e. pure cosmic Consciousness) and Prakriti or Nature (“cētya”—i.e. the material world). (40)

[Put simply, there is the primary aspect of creation that is its ‘cause’, and it is known as ‘pure cosmic Consciousness’; it is also known as Brahm. The second aspect of this creation is the ‘effect’ of the ‘presence of this consciousness’, and it is known as the Prakriti or Nature; it is the revealed aspect of the cosmic consciousness in the form of the material world as we know it.

So therefore, there are two entities to be researched and known: one is ‘consciousness’ that is at the root of everything, and the other is the effect of this consciousness that is revealed in the form of the ‘material world’ (cētyācitta). There is no other third thing to be researched and known (ōr-na tr̥tīyam). The next verse no. 41 herein below further reiterates this fundamental principle.

Shukla Yajur Veda’s 1st Upanishad is called ‘Ishavashya Upanishad’, meaning ‘where does Isha, the Supreme Lord, lives’. Its verse no.1 says: “Verily, all this universe is Brahm—i.e. a man who is wise and enlightened realises that the world has come from Brahm, is sustained by Brahm, and it finally dissolves in Brahm.” So therefore, we see that there is no ‘third element’ present.]

२ / १ / १५ युक्तौ च सम्परायात् ॥ ४१ ॥

2 / 1 / 15 yuktau ca samparāyāt || 41||

(2/1/15) Prakriti and Brahm (i.e. the gross aspect of creation represented by the material world, and the subtle and sublime aspect represented by pure consciousness respectively) have coexisted ever since the time creation came into being. (41)

[To wit, this creation has always had two components—viz. one is its subtle aspect represented by pure consciousness, and the other is its gross aspect that is represented by the material world. There is no ‘third’ component.

This verse clearly implies that the material world or the Prakriti came into being because of consciousness known as Brahm—because of the simple reason that only an entity that has ‘consciousness’ in it can think and do something. But at the same time it is also important to note that the very existence of Prakriti proved the existence of Brahm. To wit, how would anyone know that Brahm is consciousness if it does not do something actively to produce a tangible result to show that it is a living entity and not a lifeless one? And in the same vein, what is the use and relevance of Prakriti if it is like a dead tissue if there was no presence of life or consciousness represented by Brahm in it? Hence, Brahm and Prakriti help each other to make this creation relevant.

So therefore, both Brahm and Prakriti coexist and compliment each other. Hence, to have a comprehensive knowledge of existence and the truth behind it, it is equally important to learn about the material world known as Prakriti or Nature as well as the subtle world represented by the pure consciousness that is known as Brahm at the macro level and as the Atma at the micro level of creation.]

२ / १ / १६ शक्तित्वान्नानृतं वेद्यम् ॥ ४२ ॥

2 / 1 / 16 śaktitvānnānṛtaṁ vēdyam || 42||

(2/1/16) The revelation of this creation is a vivid manifestation of the supernatural and cosmic powers of Consciousness.

Therefore one must understand that both the Prakriti (Nature) and the Maya (the delusory powers that are behind it) are a vivid manifestation of Brahm (cosmic Consciousness); they represent the cosmic powers of Brahm to create and regulate.

Hence, the object of knowledge and spiritual research is the cosmic energy and dynamism of Consciousness (that would actually provide the desired reward in the form of liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the spiritual aspirant; it is this positive energy that helps the aspirant to neutralise his negative energy so that he can overcome his worldly miseries and torments to attain eternal peace, bliss and blessedness). (42)

[The very fact that this fantastically magnificent creation which seems to have no end in its dimensions as well as in the variations of its form and nature proves the stupendous powers and the majesty that is possessed by the cosmic Consciousness that has created this wonder.

The cosmic Consciousness represented by Brahm is the cause of Prakriti and Maya as we have already read in previous verse nos. 37-41. They represent the stupendous dynamism of Brahm; they symbolise the profound creative energy of Brahm.

So this verse gives the reason why one should strive to have Brahm-realisation. It is because then he would be able to harness the positive energy and dynamism of the pure cosmic Consciousness, and then put it to good use by employing it to neutralise the negative energy that is present inside him due to his continued association with this gross mundane world. When the dirt of negativity is scrubbed clean from his inner-self, the divine light of his own conscious Atma would shine through. This would remove all darkness symbolised by ignorance and delusions that had dominated him earlier, and instead fill him with spiritual enlightenment and a sense of blessedness.

So therefore, Brahm-realisation naturally leads to attainment of eternal peace, happiness, bliss and beatitude for the spiritual aspirant.

After having established why it is so important to have Brahm-realisation or God-realisation, sage Shandilya now turns his discourse back to the main theme of this book—i.e. Bhakti. This follows from the next verse no. 43.]

२ / १ / १७ तत्परिशुद्धिश्च गम्या लोकवल्लिङ्गेभ्यः ॥ ४३ ॥

2 / 1 / 17 tatpariśuddhiśca gamyā lōkavallīṅgēbhyaḥ || 43||

(2/1/17) The attainment of perfection in Bhakti, i.e. attaining its purest form, and being firmly established in the true form of Bhakti, is revealed in the form of signs that are visibly observed in this world. (43)

[When a spiritual aspirant has reached the transcendental state of Brahm-realisation, it becomes evident by his behaviour. He would be perpetually ecstatic, live in a blissful state, be meditative and contemplative, and indifferent to the mundane world and its affairs.

Similarly, when Bhakti has matured in the heart of the spiritual aspirant, he would be lost in the thoughts of his beloved Lord God, be oblivious of the surrounding world, be perpetually ecstatic and blissful, and virtually exhibit all the signs of one who has become Brahm-realised. Here a parallel is drawn between maturity of Bhakti and Brahm-realisation.

Just as Brahm representing pure consciousness is invisible, but the Prakriti or the material world created by Brahm is visible, so is the case with Bhakti. In Bhakti, when it matures, the devotee experiences the subtle presence of the Divinity, the Lord God, inside his own heart. This is an esoteric experience that manifests itself in the form of some signs exhibited by the devotee's physical body—such as it would be thrilled, have goose-bumps, tears would roll down his eyes, he would not be aware of his surroundings, would behave like a mad man, laughing, weeping, singing and dancing or even sitting in a trance, and so on and so forth.

Though attainment of maturity in Bhakti is not something to be expressly said or divulged to others, it is still revealed on its own accord by the many signs exhibited by the devotee.

So therefore, just as the glorious presence of Brahm can be understood by observing the world, so likewise one can understand the maturity of Bhakti by

observing certain signs that are apparent in a devotee. This is basically what this verse says.

The next verse no. 44 tells us some of the characteristics of true devotees of the Lord.]

२/१/१८ सम्मानबहुमानप्रीतिविरहेतरविचिकित्सामहिमख्यातितदर्थ-

प्राणस्थानतदीयतासर्वतद्वावाप्रातिकूल्यादीनि च स्मरणेभ्यो बाहुल्यात् ॥ ४४ ॥

2 / 1 / 18 sammānabahumānaprītivirahētaravicikitsāmahimakhyātītadartha-prāṇasthānatadīyatāsarvatadbhāvāprātikūlyādīni ca smaraṇēbhyō vāhulyāt || 44||

(2/1/18) [This verse outlines some of the characteristics of the devotees of the Lord God.]

The scriptures have outlined certain signs that denote the maturity of Bhakti. To wit, these examples are the practical ways Bhakti can be practiced by a devotee. Some of these are enumerated here:

(i) To have great respect and reverence for the Lord God (like was the case of Arjun who had great reverence and respect for Lord Krishna) [sammāna] {refer: Mahabharat, Drona Parva, 2822};

(ii) to have great respect and reverence for anything that has any likeness with the Lord such as any name or form that is closely like that of the Lord (because this likeness reminds the devotee of his beloved Lord God and ignites love and devotion in his heart as was the case with king Ikshwaku of Ayodhya) [bahumāna] {refer: Nrisingh Puran, 25/22};

(iii) to feel exceptionally happy by seeing or meeting a devotee of the Lord as much as meeting the Lord himself (as was the case of Bidur) [prīti] {refer: Mahabharat, Udyog Parva, 88/3124};

(iv) to feel intense pain of separation from the Lord (as was the case with the Gopis of Vrindavan who were separated from Lord Krishna) [viraha] {refer: Mahabharat, Shanti Parva, 12883};

(v) not to be interested in anything that is not directly related to the Lord (as was the case with Umpanyu and the residents of Shwet-dwipa) [ētaravicikitsā] {refer: Mahabharat, Anushaashan Parva, 14/7077};

(vi) to always remain engaged in glorifying the Lord and talking and discussing about his divinity and grand virtues that are famed in the world and so much praised in the scriptures; to constantly sing the glorious virtues of the Lord God and chant his holy name; to invoke the grace of the Lord and always remember him and his glories [mahima-khyāti] {refer: Vishnu Puran, 2/6/39-45};

(vii) to live for the sake of the Lord and serve him alone (as was the case with Hanuman whose life was entirely dedicated in the service of Lord Ram, and with the residents of Vrindavan whose life revolved around Lord Krishna) [tadartha-prāṇasthāna] {refer: Valmiki's Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 107, verse no. 31; Srimad Bhagwat Mahapurāṇ};

(viii) to be of a firm conviction that whatever things are presently possessed or whatever is due actually belongs to the Lord God (as was the case with king Bali who had gladly offered his entire empire as well as his own body to Lord Vaaman, the

dwarf incarnation of Lord Vishnu; and Uparichara Vasu) [tadīyatā] {refer: (a) the story of king Bali and Lord Vaaman appears in Srimat Bhagwat Mahapurāṇ, 8/15-23; and (b) Mahabharat, Shanti Parva, 337/12718 respectively; the story of Bali and Lord Vaaman is described in Vaaman Purāṇ's chapter nos. 73-75, 77, 89, 91-95 in great detail};

(ix) to see the Lord God in every creature, in every thing and everywhere in this world (as was the case with Prahalad who had told his angry father, the demon Hiranyakashipu, that he sees his beloved Lord everywhere and in every living being) [sarvatadbhāva] {refer: Vishnu Purāṇ, 1/17; 1/19/36-38; Srimad Bhagwat Mahapurāṇ, 7/4-8};

(x) not to act in any way that is against the wishes of the Lord or do not conform to the noble ideals of righteous and auspicious conduct that is favoured by the Lord (as was the case with Bhishma, Yudhisthir etc. in the epic story of the Mahabharat) [aprātikūlyādīni] {refer: Mahabharat, Bhishma Parva, 58/2604}.

These are but some of the examples can be remembered as to how Bhakti can be practiced and what its signs are [smaraṇēbhyō vāhulyāt]. [There are of course many other forms.] (44)

२/१/१९ द्वेषादयस्तु नैवम् ॥ ४५॥

2 / 1 / 19 dvēṣādayastu naivam || 45||

(2/1/19) Any trace of any kind of jealousy, hatred, malice, ill-will and animosity (and all other such negative traits) are not present in a true devotee of the Lord God. (45)

[A true devotee's heart is pure and holy as it becomes a dwelling place of the Lord God himself. So therefore there is no scope of any negativity being present inside it. Such emotions as hatred, jealousy, malice etc. are totally unbecoming of a pious and holy person that a devotee of the Lord is expected to be.

In the epic Mahabharat, Anushasan Parva, Chapter 149, verse no. 133, it is said: "Neither anger nor envy, nor greed, nor jealousy, nor impure thought of any kind can dwell in the heart of those who are devoted to the Supreme Being."

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 112, Lord Shiva tells goddess Uma: "Listen Uma. Those who love to worship and are always devoted to the holy feet of Lord Ram are free from desires and passions (Kaam), hypocrisy, ego and arrogance (Mada), as well as anger, malice and hatred (Krodha). They see their beloved Lord everywhere and in each individual in this creation, so where is the cause of their hating or opposing anyone in this world; why should they hate or oppose anyone at all?"

A true devotee of the Lord God sees his beloved Lord everywhere, in each individual living being. So where is the cause of his harbouring any trace of malice or jealousy or any other negative sentiments against anyone? Hence, even if he is shown lack of respect or courtesy by others he still treats them with full respect because he knows that the other person is an image of his Lord, and probably it is the Lord who is testing his sincerity of faith in him, his depth of devotion for him, and the presence of good virtues such as equanimity, tolerance, fortitude, renunciation and calmness of mind that are expected in a devotee of the Lord by employing this ruse to observe how he reacts in the face of disrespect shown by others for him.]

२/१/२० तद्वाक्यशेषात् प्रादुर्भावेष्वपि सा ॥ ४६ ॥

2 / 1 / 20 tadvākyaśēṣāt prādurbhāvēṣvapi sā || 46||

(2/1/20) The devotion (Bhakti) that is directed towards the various manifestations of the Supreme Being is also deemed to be a genuine kind of Bhakti. (46)

[We have read in the earlier verses that sage Shandilya has emphasised that true Bhakti is one that is directed to Brahm, the Supreme Being who represents the cosmic Consciousness as advised in the Upanishads. Refer to verse nos. 28-42 in this context.

So here he wishes to remove any doubt that may emerge in a person's mind as to whether the various incarnations of Brahm, such as Lord Ram, Lord Krishna and others, are worthy of reverence and having devotion for or not. Yes surely they are, and the spiritual rewards are equal too, for these different forms are visible manifestations of the same the Supreme Being whose cosmic form is invisible and incomprehensible for a common man. Since the main aim of Bhakti is to bring the individual closer to the Supreme Being, and since everyone does not have the intellectual ability to realise Brahm as expounded in the Upanishads, so therefore an easy alternate path should always be provided so that all living beings can access the spiritual nectar in the form of Bhakti for the Lord God, for all living beings have the right to find liberation and deliverance for themselves, and enable their souls to attain emancipation and salvation even if they are not too intellectually sharp, wise and enlightened enough.

In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 7/23, Lord Krishna says: “Those who worship me in any form finally attain me irrespective of the form they choose to worship (because it is me who is being ultimately worshipped in this way).”

The Brahmasamhita, verse no. 46, says: “As from one original lighted candle other candles are lit and all of them show the same light as the original, so in the same way from the same divine form of the Supreme Being other divine forms such as Lord Ram, Lord Nrisingh etc. are manifested. So they all are the same in their essence and virtues.”

The next verse no. 47 reiterates the views expressed in this present verse.]

२/१/२१ जन्मकर्मविदश्चाजन्मशब्दात् ॥ ४७ ॥

2 / 1 / 21 janmakarmavidaścājanmaśabdāt || 47||

(2/1/21) The words of the scriptures also endorse the view that those devotees of the Lord God who have properly understood the mystery of the birth and the numerous deeds of the Lord during his many incarnations find liberation from the cycle of birth and death. (47)

[Why should one study the scriptures? It is because they enlighten him about the form that the Supreme Being has taken while he revealed himself in this world, to distinguish the divine form of the Lord from all other forms of the Jivas (living beings) so that the devotee knows correctly whom to adore, whom to have devotion for, and whom to offer his worship. Since the external form of the Lord is like that of

other living beings, the devotee would be at a loss to recognise his Lord God if the scriptures were not there to guide him in this respect.

For instance, Lord Ram and Lord Krishna were like other human beings in their external appearances; they took a birth and had a gross physical body like other human beings, they grew up like others, did many worldly deeds, exhibited so many emotions and generally had other characters that are so common to all human beings, and they even had to suffer pain and pass through difficulties like ordinary men—but they were different from other men, for they were divine incarnations or a living manifestations of the Supreme Being unlike other ordinary human beings. The scriptures tell us this fact, and without their help no one would be able to distinguish between Lord Ram or Lord Krishna and other exalted men who lived on this earth. In the absence of this knowledge, how would a person know whom to offer his worship and devotion, whom to adore, and before whom to surrender? He will not know whose worship and devotion would grant him spiritual blessing, who will be able to deliver him from the trap of the cycle of transmigration, who will provide his soul with salvation and emancipation, who will give him beatitude and felicity?

So once a person understands that the various incarnations of the Supreme Being in this world, such as his manifestation in the human forms of Lord Ram and Lord Krishna, are simply a visible form of the Lord who is invisible and without any attributes in his primary cosmic form as the Supreme Lord of the universe, and that there is no difference between worshipping the Lord's macrocosmic, all-pervading, infinite and invisible form and his microcosmic form that is visible and easily comprehensible—then such persons would realise that the Lord he is worshipping is not an ordinary man but the Supreme Being himself. So by worshipping and having devotion for the various manifestations of the Supreme Being, the devotee gets the same spiritual reward as got by ascetics and enlightened sages who worship Brahm directly in order to become Brahm-realised.

To wit, even ordinary devotees who may not have the wherewithal to do Yoga and acquire Gyan can also find liberation from the cycle of birth and death in this mortal world by having Bhakti for the various incarnations of the Supreme Being. The humble devotee's soul is delivered and he easily finds emancipation and salvation by finally merging his own soul with the supreme Soul represented by the form of the Supreme Being he worships in the same way that highly enlightened and self-realised ascetics and sages do by meditating upon the 'self' which is pure consciousness known as the Atma, as well as upon Brahm who represents the cosmic Consciousness known as the Parmatma.

Now, a question arises: Why has the eternal and divine Brahm, the Supreme Being who has no forms, taints and attributes, assumed a gross form with the attributes and characteristics that are so characteristic of this mortal, gross and mundane world? The answer is this: The Supreme Being has done it for the benefit of his devotees. He has been gracious enough to assume a visible gross form in a world that is characterised by the cycle of birth and death so that his ordinary devotees can enjoy his presence amongst themselves. Since the laws that regulate this world have been ordained by the Lord himself, he feels it obligatory to follow them—and that is why the Lord takes a birth and assumes a gross body, and also goes through the entire process of life in this world like any other living being who has a physical gross body so that there is no transgression of the laws of Nature.

It is said in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 185 that the Supreme Lord reveals himself at any place if the devotee has sufficient devotion and love for him, and wishes to see the Lord personally.

Further it is said in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 121 that: “Whenever sins and evil qualities become dominant, and righteousness and good virtues are on the verge of extinction, the Lord God manifests himself at such times to restore the balance in favour of the goodness and put things in order in a general way.”

Similarly, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 33 along with Chauapi line nos. 6-8 it is said: “Lord Ram is eternal and infinite, and so are his glories. Though his invisible all-pervading cosmic form has no origin or birth, but he does reveal himself and assumes a visible form from time to time in different eras of the celestial cycles of birth and death. So a wise person should not doubt the divinity of the Lord in any of these births and forms.”

So a wise and intelligent devotee understands that the visible form of the Lord God he is offering his worship to is the same supreme Divinity, the same Supreme Being to whom the scriptures advise a creature to be devoted to and offer worship.

This devotee also realises that the Lord has simply followed the Laws of Nature and Creation by taking birth like other ordinary living beings and have a gross perishable body as this is the natural process of creation and destruction in this mortal world, for the Lord cannot set a bad example by violating the sacrosanct laws of creation that he has set and ordained himself.

In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 10/9, Lord Krishna says: “My form and activities are divine. A person who knows and understands this reality does not have to take a birth again after leaving his body, but he comes to me (i.e. he finds liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death).”

In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 4/7-8, Lord Krishna says: “Oh Arjun! Whenever righteousness is on the decline and unrighteousness is on the increase, I assume a physical body (i.e. I reveal myself) for the protection of goodness and elimination of evil, and to establish Dharma on a strong footing. In this way I am born in different eras of the celestial cycle of birth and death.”

Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇ, 10/29/14 and 10/36 say: “The Lord descends for bestowing the boon of final beatitude on human beings; out of his infinite merciful nature he does so to show grace upon his devotees; so that his devotees can remember his divine life and its glories in order to find freedom from the humdrum affairs of life in this gross mundane world.”

This spiritual reward is obtained because the devotee would have cleared his mind of all delusions that cause so many doubts and confusions regarding the divinity of the soul and its relationship with the supreme Soul. This state of awareness or spiritual enlightenment leads to ‘Mukti’—freedom from all fetters that tie a soul to the cycle of transmigration.]

२/१/२२ तच्च दिव्यं स्वशक्तिमात्रोद्भवात् ॥ ४८ ॥

2/1/22 tacca divyaṁ svaśaktimātrōdbhavāt || 48||

(2/1/22) The deeds done and activities undertaken by the Lord in his various manifestations are all divine by nature, and they are beyond the usual grossness associated with this mundane world.

The Lord has revealed himself by his own wish, and it is his own cosmic power known as Maya (the power that causes delusions) that creates an illusion of his

being an ordinary person doing ordinary deeds like any other ordinary living being.
(48)

[The Lord wishes to keep his identity secret. He wishes that only a selected few get to know who he actually is. So he uses the powers of Maya, the cosmic power of the Lord that creates delusions, to hide his divinity and cosmic form.

A wise and enlightened devotee understands this. That is why he does not doubt the Lord's divinity, and hence he does not get confused by the Lord's ordinary behaviour in this world. He relies on the words of the scriptures that tell him to be careful not to be deluded by the Lord's seemingly ordinary-looking life in this world—because the Lord is simply following the Rules of Nature ordained by himself when he behaves in an ordinary way. The Lord does not want to break his own laws by acting superhumanly if he had chosen to assume the form of a human being. But every now and then some incidents do occur that clearly reflect that the human form of the Lord is just a veil hiding the cosmic powers of the Supreme Being. It is only the rare wise person who sees through this mystery.

A simple example of this is that during the entire bloody war of Mahabharata, Arjun remained unharmed because Lord Krishna was driving his war chariot. Further, it is indeed remarkable that Krishna was not wounded during the war while all other participants suffered grave wounds. Arjun had not fully realised the gravity of the situation, and thought that it was he who had won the war. So at the end of the war, Lord Krishna told him to get off the chariot first. As soon as the Lord stepped down, the chariot was reduced to a heap of crumpled iron and burnt wood.

In the story of the Ramayana we read that Lord Ram gave a signet ring to Hanuman to be used as an identity proof to be shown to Sita when the monkey army was sent to search for her. There were hundreds and thousands of monkeys and bears who were dispatched for this purpose, but Lord Ram knew that only Hanuman would make it. That is obviously why the Lord gave the ring to him—because he was certain that Sita would be found, and that it was Hanuman who would find her.

This are small examples to show that every now and then some small event took place that proved the divinity and super-natural powers of a particular form of the Lord.

In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 4/6, Lord Krishna says: “Though I am without a birth and death as I am eternal, and am present as the Atma or the soul of all living beings in this creation, yet often I reveal myself independently by employing my own cosmic powers (known as Maya that create delusions). But even then, I keep my nature under strict control and conform to my divine origin.”]

२/१/२३ मुख्यं तस्य हि कारुण्यम् ॥ ४९ ॥

2 / 1 / 23 mukhyaṁ tasya hi kāruṇyam || 49||

(2/1/23) The chief reason why the Supreme Lord takes birth in this world to live amongst ordinary creatures is his extreme gracious, benevolent and compassionate nature which obliges him to bless the world and its inhabitants whenever they require his presence. So the Lord comes down to personally live with them and to provide them with an opportunity to be close to him during his manifestation. For other generations that follow, the Lord provides a mean by which they can have an easy access to him by remembering his glorious life and deeds. (49)

[It is said in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 185 that the Supreme Lord reveals himself at any place if the devotee has sufficient devotion and love for him, and wishes to see the Lord personally.

Further it is said in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 121 that: “Whenever sins and evil qualities become dominant, and righteousness and good virtues are on the verge of extinction, the Lord God manifests himself at such times to restore the balance in favour of the goodness and put things in order in a general way.”

Similarly, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 33 along with Chauapi line nos. 6-8 it is said: “Lord Ram is eternal and infinite, and so are his glories. Though his invisible all-pervading cosmic form has no origin or birth, but he does reveal himself and assumes a visible form from time to time in different eras of the celestial cycles of birth and death. So a wise person should not doubt the divinity of the Lord in any of these births and forms.”

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Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇ, 10/29/14 and 10/36 say: “The Lord descends for bestowing the boon of final beatitude on human beings; out of his infinite merciful nature he does so to show grace upon his devotees; so that his devotees can remember his divine life and its glories in order to find freedom from the humdrum affairs of life in this gross mundane world.”

In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 10/9, Lord Krishna says: “My form and activities are divine. A person who knows and understands this reality does not have to take a birth again after leaving his body, but he comes to me (i.e. he finds liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death).”

These verses answer the question: Why should the Lord take birth and engage himself in activities though he has no need for them? He does this to bless his devotees and give them a chance to attain liberation and deliverance from this world of grossness and mundanity by the simple method of remembering the Lord’s divine life and the glories associated with it.]

२ / १ / २४ प्राणित्वान्न विभूतिषु ॥ ५० ॥

2 / 1 / 24 prāṇitvāṇna vibhūtiṣu || 50||

(2/1/24) It ought to be remembered here that worship, devotion and affection for other living beings or rendering service to them, no matter how exalted they may be or what excellent virtues and mystical powers they may possess, is not equivalent to worshipping, rendering service to, and having devotion and affection for the Supreme Being himself (in his manifestation as a living being as mentioned in the previous verses). (50)

[This verse is meant to caution the devotee that he should be very careful while selecting the object of his adoration, worship and devotion. To wit, adoration, worship

and devotion for a manifested form of the Supreme Being is quite different from adoring and showing respect to other exalted souls no matter who they may be.

One should note that though it is true that the Atma or the soul of all living beings is the same, and that it is also true that the individual's Atma is the microcosmic form of the supreme Atma that has a cosmic presence and is known as the Supreme Being, yet there does exist some subtle difference at the spiritual level between ordinary human beings and the Supreme Being. It is because no matter how wise, enlightened and learned a person may be, he will invariably have some traces of grossness that is so characteristic of all the Jivas, the living beings, by the virtue of their having a gross physical body made of the five elements of earth, fire, water, air and sky, as opposed to the form that the Supreme Being assumes during his incarnation in this world because the Lord's form is free from any traces of grossness that are associated with this mundane world. To wit, the Lord's form is divine and holy as opposed to the form of other living beings, whether he is a great king, a sage, a saint, or for that matter any other exalted person or creature.

So therefore, a wise devotee ensures that his Bhakti is directed to the Supreme Being himself even when he worships the Lord in his various manifestations as advised in the scriptures, and not to someone else no matter how high he may be, or what mystical powers he may possess. The latter form of Bhakti is deemed to be improper and of an inferior kind. In this context, refer to verse no. 18 where it is said that worship offered to gods and deities other than the Supreme Being is of an inferior and degraded kind.

In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 9/23, it is said that: "Those who are devoted to other gods and worship them with unwavering faith, such worship is not recognised as the right method of worship even though all these forms are my own images. Such forms of worship deprive the worshipper of direct access to me, and hence they are also deprived from the eclectic spiritual reward of immortality and beatitude. Whereas my devotees come to me and are freed from the cycle of transmigration, those who worship others go to them and remain trapped in this cycle."]

२ / १ / २५ द्यूतराजसेवयोः प्रतिषेधाच्च ॥ ५१ ॥

2 / 1 / 25 dyūtarājasēvayōḥ pratiṣēdhācca || 51||

(2/1/25) Service to Kings is prohibited in the scriptures (for a true devotee of the Lord God) because such service needs cunning, deceit and conceit to be successfully done.

[*This verse can be read as follows: "One need not serve a king or engage in gambling or any other deceitful activities as they are prohibited (in the scriptures)."] (51)

[This verse is an extension of the idea expressed in the previous verse no. 50.

It is impossible for a simple-hearted, pious, honest and straightforward person to be successful in serving any king. All royal courts are plagued by intrigue and are rife with complex political plays. So it becomes well nigh impossible for a holy man to be in the good looks of a king. On the other hand, there is a grave danger of falling prey to the scheming of selfish courtiers who would certainly not like such a man in their midst. The king himself likes flattery and sycophancy, he would like that his subjects treat him as a living god. So the king would treat a devotee with utter

contempt and disdain when he finds out that the latter is worshipping some one else instead of the king himself.

Hence, this verse gives a prudent advice to a devotee to shun any service to any worldly king or emperor—or for that matter any lord or master in this world. For the devotee, his real ‘King’ and the real ‘Master and Lord’ is his beloved God to whom he is devoted and whom he loves from the core of his heart. So why should and why would he like to serve other human beings, no matter who they may be or how powerful they might be?

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46, Lord Ram has declared: “If one says that he is my devotee but expects something from others, say what faith does he have in me; how can he claim to be my true devotee if he can’t rely on me alone for his well-being and has to seek favours from others?”]

*If we take into account the second version this verse can be read, it would mean that a devotee should shun all activities that are deceitful and unrighteous such as gambling or playing the game of dice besides shunning any service to worldly kings and lords. He should rather focus on his Lord God and serve him along with practicing the glorious virtues of honesty and up-righteousness.]

२/१/२६ वासुदेवेऽपीति चेन्नाकारमात्रत्वात् ॥ ५२ ॥

2 / 1 / 26 vāsudēvē 'pīti cēnnākāramātrtvāt || 52||

(2/1/26) If it is argued that the manifested form of the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Vasudeo (one of the names of Lord Krishna) too had a gross body like other living beings, or that the Lord also ruled the earth like other great Kings (when he became established his capital at Dwarka), so it would be wrong to worship him and have devotion for him (as advised especially in verse nos. 50 and 51), then this would be a fallacious argument.

It is because the Lord’s true identity and subtle form is sublime, pure, divine and holy as opposed to the forms of other living beings including great Kings. (52)

[Lord Vasudeo, literally meaning the Lord of Vasus, is another name of Lord Krishna. He had established his kingdom in Dwarka. Further, it is well documented and known that Krishna had played a pivotal role in the epic war of Mahabharata. So is it advisable to worship such a Lord in the context of what has been said in verse nos. 50 and 51 herein above?

This present verse addresses this question and removes any doubt that may arise in the mind of the devotee. The answer is ‘Yes, Lord Vasudeo or Lord Krishna is to be worshipped as a manifestation of the Supreme Being known as Lord Vishnu’.

How can we be certain of it? The answer is ‘By studying the scriptures that never tell a lie or mislead.’ The scriptures speak in an unequivocal language about the divinity of Lord Krishna and his primary form as being the Supreme Being. So worship and devotion offered to Lord Krishna or Lord Vasudeo is deemed to be offered to the Supreme Being. He was no ordinary man or king. Refer verse no. 53 herein below that reiterates this principle.

Here it will be pertinent to have a look at the term ‘Vasudeo’. The word has two parts: viz. ‘Vasu’ and ‘Deo’. The second part ‘Deo’ means a Lord, while ‘Vasu’

refers to the many mystical powers and divine qualities that are uniquely possessed by the Supreme Being.

There are said to be eight 'Vasus' and they have been described in the following Upanishads: (i) Atharva Veda's Atharva Shikha Upanishad, Kandika 1; Brihajjabal Upanishad, Brahman 4, verse no. 16, Brahman 6, verse no. 12; Nrisingh Tapni Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3.

The 'Vasus' are the various patron Gods who preside over the essential elements of life. They are eight in number as follows—Vishnu who is the sustainer, Shiva who is the annihilator, Kuber who is the treasurer of the wealth of the Gods, the Sun, Water, Fire, Wealth represented by gems and gold, and 'Ray' representing glory and fame. The element 'Fire' is the most potent, prominent and essential force in creation, because without fire the world would freeze to death. Hence, the Fire-God is said to be the chief amongst the Vasus. The 'fire' element is the active force in creation and is primarily responsible for kindling the cosmic cauldron that set in motion the process, and once having set it in motion it then sustained it and would finally annihilate it by burning it to cinders. On the other hand, Lord Vishnu is the passive force of creation represented by his other form of Viraat Purush which is the primary male aspect of creation. Lord Vishnu, who is the sustainer of the creation, is the Lord of Laxmi who is the Goddess of wealth, and is the supreme creator because Brahma, the old patriarch of creation who created the visible world and its creatures, was himself born atop the divine lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu utilizes the services of Laxmi who is the personification of the active forces of creation to create, sustain and annihilate the world. The Vasus are symbolic Gods who represent those essentials aspects of creation without which life would be difficult to conceive and sustain and finally conclude.

The eight Vasus are the patron Gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are— (i) Kuber (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun God (who provides energy and food) and his rays and radiance (i.e. sunlight and the energy that it provides), (iii) Shiva (the concluder or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Vishnu (the sustainer), (v) the Water God (called Varun), (vi) the Fire God (called Agni), (vii) any body of water such as a pond, a river etc., and (viii) holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation). According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 3/9/3, the Vasus are the following—Fire, Earth, Air, Antariksha (the space of the solar system), Aditya (Sun), Duloka (heavens), the Moon, and the Nakshatras (the stars and the planets).

According to Purans, the eight Vasus are the following—Dhruv, Dhar, Som/Soma (the sap of an elixir-providing plant called Som/Soma which is used during religious ceremonies as sanctified liquid offered to the Gods; it is white in colour and is said to be stored in the moon), Aapha (water), Anil (wind), Anal (fire), Pratush, and Prabhaas.

These eight Vasus are the semi-Gods who symbolise the various types of assets needed to sustain this world. They therefore represent such assets as jewels, precious stones and gems, gold and other forms of wealth and property. Vasus also refers to the fire and water elements as well as their grosser forms as the terrestrial fire and water bodies such as ponds and lakes; to the virtue of radiance, splendour and glory; to the ray of light; to Kuber (the treasurer of Gods), Shiva, Sun, Vishnu, and a simple and pious gentleman.

The Ekakchar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 7, says that these Vasus are manifestations of Brahm in order to provide the creation with the necessities of life.

The Atharva-shikha Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, in its Kandika (Canto) 1 says that the Vasus were created in the beginning of creation from the first Matra 'A' of OM representing the first leg of the supreme Brahm along with Brahma the creator, the Rig Veda, the Gayatri Chand and the Grahapatya Agni.

The Brihajjabal Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Brahman 4, verse no. 16 lists the eight Vasus as follows—Ghar, Dhruv, Soma, Kripa, Anil, Anal, Pratyush and Prabhash. [The Vasus are the personified forms of the essential things that the supreme Creator created in this world so that the forthcoming creation would be well provided for and its essential needs taken care of. Some of these essentials were Fire ('Anal') that gave light, heat and energy, Air ('Anil') that breathed life into the creature's body and prevented suffocation, Water that acted as the soothing balm, the lubricating liquid and the nectar of life ('Soma'), a dwelling (a 'Ghar'), whether it was a cave, a crevice, a tree branch or a mud hut that the creature needed for its residence and protection against the vagaries of Nature, the virtue of compassion and kindness ('Kripa') to let one's neighbour too live and enjoy life to the full, and so on and so forth. These were the 'assets' that were personified as various Gods named here.]

The Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, in its Brahman 1, verse no. 3 says that the Vasus, along with the Rudras and Adityas etc., were born out of the third step of the divine Anushtup Chanda in which the Mantra of Lord Nrisingh was revealed to the creator Brahma when he did severe Tapa in order to initiate the process of creation.

The Devi Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 4 says that the Vasus are manifestations of the Mother Goddess, who actually represents the dynamism of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being. The Goddess is the energy, authority and powers of Brahm that are employed by the latter to create and control this creation, both at the macrocosmic level as well as the microcosmic level.

The Vasu is this dynamism of Brahm revealed at the macrocosmic level.

The Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 5, verse no. 4/32 says that the Vasus are none but manifestations of Lord Ram who himself is the supreme transcendental Brahm himself.

The Vasus are the Nature's gift to creature. They were the natural assets formed by the supreme Brahm so as to make life feasible and convenient in creation. In other words, the supreme Brahm who is also known as Lord Ram not only created this world but ensured that it is well provided for and its basic needs are taken care of by manifesting himself in the form of these eight primary requirements of life. This is the reason why one of the names of Vishnu is 'Vasudeo'—the Lord of Vasus. It ought to be noted here that Lord Ram is an incarnation of Vishnu or Vasudeo.

The Tripura Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, paragraph no. 9 describes the great characteristics of Lord Vishnu as follows—

“Those who are wise, learned and erudite see the divine abode of Lord Vishnu as stretching in the clean space of the sky as far as the eyes can see. It stretches across the sky from one end to the other. Therefore, the abode of Lord Vishnu is the 'sky' itself. On the one hand it is as vast, fathomless, indescribable, remote and inaccessible as the bottomless reaches of the infinite sky element, and on the other hand it is easily reached, viewed, touched and accessed as the sky that is seen with the naked eyes,

that surrounds everything at close quarters, and that touches each and every creature directly.

Lord Vishnu is many-faced (i.e. he has uncountable forms and shapes; all the creatures and all the aspects of creation are some or the other form of Vishnu). He uniformly pervades everywhere in this creation; whatever that exists is completely soaked in and surrounded by Vishnu. There is nowhere where the Lord is not present. His divine abode is the sky with a high summit. The Gods headed by Brahma the creator and the Sun God always look up to this divine abode of the Lord in the heaven to have his divine glimpse. They bear the Lord in their hearts.

Lord Vishnu lives in a subtle form in all the creatures of this creation. That is why is known as ‘Vasudeo’—one who lives in all.

There is another connotation of the term ‘Vasudeo’. It means the Lord of the eight Vasus. These Vasus are the primary assets created by the supreme Creator, the Brahm, to provide for the welfare of the creation that he created. Thus, the Vasus include such elementary needs of creation as water and fire etc.

Lord Vishnu is also known as the Viraat Purush, the infinite, invisible macrocosmic gross body of Brahm, the supreme transcendental Consciousness from which the entire creation evolved or emerged. The Viraat Purush was the first gross form of Brahm. It was ‘gross’ only in a relative term vis-à-vis the Brahm himself, but when compared to all the other units of the forthcoming creation, this Viraat Purush was almost as subtle as Brahm himself. The difference between Brahm and the Viraat Purush was only of a measurement of a millionth of a million degree in subtlety. Now, it was from this Viraat Purush that the rest of creation evolved. Even the creator of the visible world, Brahma, emerged atop a divine lotus that rose from the navel of the Viraat Purush. Once the creation took shape, the Viraat Purush assumed for himself the role of its keeper and sustainer. Hence, Brahm assumed the role of the Viraat Purush to create the primary forces of creation, including the Gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahm, Vishnu and Shiva, and once it was done, he assumed the role of the overall commander and controller of creation in the form of Lord Vishnu. This is why Vishnu is primarily regarded as being synonymous with Brahm, and treated as the Supreme Being.

Besides this, the virtues of Vishnu that he is all-pervading and all-encompassing are also applicable to Brahm only, making him synonymous with the latter.”

Lord Vishnu is called ‘Vasudeo’ because he is the sustainer and protector of creation, signifying his undisputed lordship over all the essential elements in Nature, called the Vasus of which there are eight in number, which were created at the beginning of creation to help sustain the upcoming creation. It ought to be noted here that Vishnu is also called Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm, and it is from this form of Brahm that the creator of the visible creation, i.e. Brahma the old patriarch of creation, had emerged atop a divine lotus that sprouted from the navel of Vishnu. In other words, everything has its origin in the supreme Brahm.

The Krishna Yajur Veda’s Suk Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 25 lists the names of Vishnu as Vasudeo, Sankarshan, Pradumna and Aniruddha.

The Atharva Veda’s Devi Upanishad, verse no. 5 says that Vishnu is actually a manifestation of the Shakti, which is the cosmic dynamic powers and energy of Brahm, the Supreme Being, employed by the Lord to take care of this creation which the same Lord has created in his manifestation as Brahma the creator. It also goes on to say that the terrestrial world is the foot of Vishnu.

The glories of the Vishnu as the Viraat Purush have been enumerated in the Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, paragraph no. 11, and Canto 6, paragraph no. 11.

The same Upanishad enumerates the glorious virtues of Vishnu independently in its Canto 1, paragraph no. 1, 6; Canto 2, paragraph no. 11; and Canto 8, paragraph no. 17. These together collectively present a combined picture of the grand form of the Viraat Purush.

It is said in the Vishnu Puran, 4/11/4, 5/1/2, 5/3/3 that: “The Lord who has revealed in the Yadav clan as Krishna is the one who eliminates all sins; he is the supreme Brahm who is all-pervading and omnipresent in this universe; he is Lord Vishnu himself who has manifested in the form of Lord Krishna who gives delight to the whole world.”

So we see that Lord Vasudeo is not an ordinary King or Emperor, but he is the Supreme Lord himself in a human form. And therefore, he is worthy of worship and devotion like the Supreme Being himself is.

The following verses reiterate and endorse this principle again.]

२/१/२७ प्रत्यभिज्ञानाच्च ॥ ५३ ॥

2 / 1 / 27 pratyabhijñānācca || 53||

(2/1/27) [And how do we know it—that Lord Vasudeo is the same Lord as the Supreme Being, and therefore he is worthy of adoration, worship and devotion?] This fact has been endorsed by the scriptures. (53)

[As has already been emphasised earlier, we look up to authentic scriptures whenever there is a doubt in our minds. So when it comes to the question whether Lord Vasudeo should be treated like other human kings or is he a manifestation of the Supreme Being, we consult the scriptures to arrive at a conclusive answer. These scriptures tell us that indeed, Lord Vasudeo is a manifestation of the Supreme Being known as Lord Vishnu. A detailed note has been appended to verse no. 52 herein above in this regard.

Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 1/2/28 says: “The Vedas ultimately treat Lord Vasudeo as being the Supreme Lord, the different religious sacrifices themselves are aimed at the attainment of Vasudeo, the various Yogas eventually lead to Vasudeo, and all sorts of rituals too have their end in Vasudeo. Therefore final attainment is Lord Vasudeo.”

In Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 1/3/28 we read that sage Markandeya tells Ydhishtir: “The Supreme Being whom I witnessed at the time of dissolution of this creation is the same Lord who has now revealed himself as Lord Krishna.”

In Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 4/24/28, Lord Rudra (one of the many forms of Lord Shiva) tells Prachetas: “A devotee who has surrendered himself to Lord Vasudeo is very dear to me. Indeed, Lord Vasudeo is beyond the triple Gunas of Prakriti, and also he is superior to all the Jivas including the celestial beings.”

Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 1/2/7, says: “Steadfast devotion to Lord Vasudeo forthwith endows one with full philosophical knowledge of the Supreme Being and his Divinity, as well as it helps such a person to develop aversion to worldly enjoyments.”

Sage Markandey told Ydishtir in Mahabharat, Vanaparva, Chapter 189, verse no. 13002 says: “The Lord with beautiful lotus-like eyes that I saw previously, the

same Lord has now revealed himself as Lord Vasudeo to become your friend and guide.”

In Vishnu Puran, 4/4/2, sage Parashara says: “Men listening to the history of the race of the Yadus will get rid of impurity of their hearts for in the said race was born the Supreme Lord known as Vasudeo.”

The divinity and glories of Lord Vasudeo have been described in Gopal Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition.]

२/१/२८ वृष्णिषु श्रेष्ठ्येन तत् ॥ ५४ ॥

2 /1 /28 vṛṣṇiṣu śraīṣṭhyēna tat || 54||

(2/1/28) Indeed, Lord Vasudeo is a manifested form of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, himself. There is ‘that’ Supreme Being himself (who is so much praised and honoured in the scriptures). (54)

[This verse clears the air about the divinity of Lord Vasudeo. It is an extension of the previous verse nos. 52-53.]

२/१/२९ एवं प्रसिद्धेषु च ॥ ५५ ॥

2 /1 /29 ēvaṁ prasiddhēṣu ca || 55||

(2/1/29) In this way it is well established that worship, devotion and service rendered to the different manifestations of the Supreme Being (such as Lord Krishna, Lord Ram, Lord Vaaman etc.) are all equivalent to rendering such worship, devotion and service directly to the Lord himself. All such forms of service are deemed to be proper forms of devotion and worship of the Lord God. Hence, all of them are equal, and all of them would grant the spiritual reward of liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the devotee. (55)

[This verse concludes the discussion revolving around the proper way of offering worship to the Lord God. We have observed that primarily there are two levels at which one can worship the Supreme Being—viz. (i) the higher intellectual level that involves Gyan and Yoga where the spiritual aspirant aspires to have God-realisation by focusing on the cosmic form of the Lord known as Brahm that symbolises pure Consciousness; and (ii) an ordinary level suitable for ordinary living beings where he is advised to have Bhakti or devotion for the many manifestations of the Lord. The second method is easy, hassle-free and within the reach of the common devotee as opposed to the first method that is possible only for a rare devotee of high intellectual abilities, and who has already attained some level of spiritual enlightenment, to implement successfully.]

॥ शाण्डिल्य भक्ति सूत्रम् ॥

द्वितीयोऽध्यायः

द्वितीयमाह्निकम्

|| śāṇḍilya bhakti sūtram ||

dvitīyō 'dhyāyaḥ

dvitīyamāhnikam

२ /२ /१ भक्त्या भजनोपसंहाराद्गौण्या परायै तद्धेतुत्वात् ॥ ५६ ॥

2 /2 /1 bhaktyā bhajanōpasamhārādgauṇyā parāyai taddhētutvāt || 56||

(2/2/1) ‘Bhajan’ (worshipping the Lord God by remembering him, his glories and his divinity, by reciting his holy stories and repeating his holy name, by keeping the mind focused exclusively on the Lord and to exclude everything else from its ambit, and to derive ecstasy and bliss by doing so) is one of the primary ways by which Bhakti can reach its maturity. (56)

[Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 9/14-15, clearly delineates the paths to God-realisation. Lord Krishna says: “My devotees engage themselves in constantly chanting my divine Name with firmness and steadfastness of mind, with all humility and sincerity, and bowing repeatedly before my form (i.e. my manifested form or its representation in the form of a picture or an image)—verily indeed, this way they attain me. Others (who follow the path of Gyan or knowledge and Yoga or meditation) too attain me when they offer their self to me and worship my absolute form that is without attributes, a form that is eternal, infinite and pure consciousness. While still there are others who worship me in the form of my celestial revelations (in the form of Nature and its components) by the path of different rituals and religious sacrifices—they too attain me (because it is me who exists in all these forms).”

These two verses of the Geeta clearly indicate that there are three levels of worshipping the Supreme Being—viz. (i) worshipping a manifested form of the Lord by the path of Bhakti of which Bhajan is an important tool; (ii) worshipping the cosmic form of the Lord as Brahm or pure Consciousness for which knowledge and meditation are important tools; and (iii) worshipping the different dynamic forces of Nature or aspects of creation which represent the dynamic form of Brahm, as there is nothing in creation that is not one or the other form of Brahm, by doing rituals and sacrifices.

In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 9/29, Lord Krishna explicitly declares the importance of being devoted to the manifested form of the Supreme Being: “I (in my all-pervading and subtle form as the Atma, the soul, the cosmic Consciousness) am

equally present in all beings, animate or inanimate. There is no one who is hateful or dear to me (as I am equally present in all). However, those who worship me and are devoted to me, I do surely reveal myself in them (i.e. they feel my presence up close inside their own heart), and they abide in me—i.e. I and my ardent devotee become one and inseparable.”

In the earlier verses we have read that ‘Gyan’ or knowledge and enlightenment, and Yoga or meditation and contemplation, are other important tools for attaining success in Bhakti or having devotion for the Lord God.

Gyan and Yoga are more relevant to obtain success in realisation of that form of the Supreme Being which has a cosmic dimension, the form that is known as Brahm representing pure cosmic Consciousness that is infinite, eternal, invisible, all-pervading, without any attributes, subtle and sublime.

On the other hand, Bhajan is more apt as a tool for worshipping the Lord’s form that is more easily accessible to a common human being because he can better relate to it. So Bhajan is a form of devotion that is offered to that divine aspect of the Supreme Being which has manifested in a visible form in this world. It is a form that is easily identifiable and known because it has taken a birth right here in this world to live amongst his devotees as if the Lord was one of them. This manifested form of the Lord God is easily understood by even an ordinary man as he can comfortably relate to it because this visible form of the Lord is like the other known forms he is well acquainted with in this mundane world. This manifested form of the Lord God is not like the Lord’s cosmic form known as Brahm that represents pure Consciousness that is too far and too abstract for a person to comprehend. This latter form is attainable by only a rare few highly enlightened and spiritually evolved sages and ascetics, but it eludes the common man.

So the scriptures devised this easy device of ‘Bhajan’—which means worshipping the Lord God by remembering him, his glories and his divinity, by reciting his holy stories and repeating his holy name, by keeping the mind focused exclusively on the Lord and to exclude everything else from its ambit, and to derive ecstasy and bliss by doing so—to enable even a common man to have access to the nectar of spirituality, to attain eternity, peace, bliss and beatitude that are usually achieved by following the higher path of Gyan and Yoga that culminates in Brahm-realisation.

The general idea conveyed in verse nos. 46-49 and 55 herein above is that offering worship and service to a manifested form of the Supreme Being, such as to his human incarnations known as Lord Ram or Lord Krishna, is equivalent to doing so directly to the Lord in his cosmic form known as Brahm. To wit, having Bhakti for Lord Ram or Lord Krishna would yield the same spiritual reward that is obtained by following the path of Gyan and Yoga to attain Brahm-realisation.

The present verse no. 56 now tells us how to do Bhakti for the manifested form of the Supreme Being. The way to do this is ‘Bhajan’—i.e. to remember the divine story related to the life and time of the Lord on this earth, to sing or recite this story with great faith, devotion, love and affection in one’s heart, to feel joy and rapture and experience the Lord’s presence while singing his glories and deeds, to repeat the Lord’s holy name and derive immense spiritual bliss while doing so, and to be so delighted in getting involved in these activities that the person does not want to do anything else related to this mundane world. The feeling of spiritual fulfilment and blessedness, of ecstasy and bliss should so overwhelm the devotee that he would gradually move away from the gross world and towards the spiritual world where he

finds a sense of eternal closeness with his beloved Lord God. This state marks the culmination of Bhakti; it is a state of mature Bhakti.

Hence, like Gyan and Yoga that bring about Brahm-realisation for an ascetic and sage, 'Bhajan' too helps the devotee to become God-realised, albeit it is in the Lord's manifested form.

Bhajan is an easy spiritual tool recommended for a common man who may not have the mental calibre and the intellectual ability to comprehend the Lord's cosmic invisible form that seems to be too abstract for him to grasp. The devotee has the opportunity to worship and love his favourite Lord God by reciting the divine story of the Lord's exemplary life on earth, by remembering the great deeds the Lord had done, the magnificent virtues he had, and by recalling the legend of devotees who were liberated and delivered by their association with the Lord. This opportunity is surely not available if one worships the Lord's cosmic, invisible and infinite form known as Brahm who represents pure Consciousness.

The story of the Lord's life here in this world is definitely more appealing and attractive and easy to comprehend and relate to as compared to the abstract philosophy of the Upanishads and the Vedas that deal directly with the invisible, infinite, subtle, sublime, attributeless and cosmic form of the Supreme Being that is pure Consciousness.

The next verse no. 57 tells us that 'Kirtan' is another important component of worshipping the Lord God, and it is complimentary to doing 'Bhajan'.]

२ / २ / २ रागार्थप्रकीर्तिसाहचर्याच्चेतरेषाम् ॥ ५७ ॥

2 / 2 / 2 rāgārthaprakīrtisāhacaryāccētarēṣām || 57||

(2/2/2) Doing 'Kirtan' with full devotion and affection for the Lord God (i.e. worshipping the Lord by singing his divine glories, reciting his holy stories, repeating his holy name and chanting his Mantras, either singly or in a group, with a rapturous mind that leads to ecstasy and bliss) is another important tool by which Bhakti can be practiced successfully and reach maturity. Kirtan brings the devotee close to his Lord*. (57)

[Refer also to verse no. 63. It ought to be noted here that like other forms of symbolic service done to the Lord God, Kirtan is also secondary form of Bhakti. It is one of the many ways a devotee can offer his worship to the Lord God.

The question arises: If Kirtan and other such means of Bhakti are 'secondary or subsidiary' in nature, then what is the 'primary' form of Bhakti? The answer is: The primary form of Bhakti is having undiluted and pure love and devotion for Lord God as envisaged in verse nos. 2 and 83. All others are aids in Bhakti, and so are secondary to this main objective.

The glory and importance of 'Kirtan' is highlighted in Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 11/36, when Arjun told Lord Krishna: "Oh Lord! The world exults and is filled with love and ecstasy by singing your glories and virtues, and by chanting your holy name. Evil and demonic forces run away when they hear such auspicious words, while mystics and pious souls bow their heads in reverence."

Similarly, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 128, sage Valmiki tells Lord Ram: "Oh Lord, you should live in the

heart of those whose ears do not tire of listening your holy stories and divine glories just like the ocean that never gets filled by the rivers that continuously flow into it.”

Once again, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 129, sage Valmiki tells Lord Ram: “Oh Lord, you should live in the heart of those who regularly repeat your holy Mantra which is deemed to be like a king amongst all the spiritual formulas.”

In the previous verse no. 57 we have read that ‘Bhajan’ is an important way by which a devotee can practice Bhakti and bring it to maturity. Now this present verse tells us that ‘Kirtan’ is also another important tool for doing Bhakti successfully.

Like Bhajan, ‘Kirtan’ too is an easy tool for spiritual fulfilment and bring Bhakti to its maturity as it does not need any special efforts, any specialisation or any sort of expertise in the scriptures to be practiced successfully.

Moreover, since the method used in this practice is ‘singing, chanting and reciting the divine glories of the Lord’, it directly touches the heart. It is also an attractive and simple method to keep the mind occupied with the thoughts of the Lord God by excluding all other thoughts from it—because one needs to be attentive and focused in his mind to correctly remember the events associated with the life of the Lord and his countless glories and holy names if one were to keep the rhythm and maintain the symphony of singing and dancing. Any sort of mental distraction will obviously disrupt the process.

Another positive aspect of doing ‘Kirtan’ is that it motivates others to join the process of Bhakti because singing and reciting the Lord’s glories and repeating his divine names etc. as done in Kirtan usually involves a group of devotees rather than the single devotee as compared to ‘Bhajan’ that is usually done as a private affair.

Besides this, Kirtan involves an active participation of many organs of the body than is the case with Bhajan. For instance, for doing Kirtan the mouth is used for singing and reciting, the ears are used to listen, the hand is used to clap and make joyful gestures, the legs are used to dance, the mind is used to recollect and remember the Lord’s glories and the events associated with his life in a coherent manner, the heart is involved to lend the emotive support that is needed for singing rapturously, and the whole body lends its own support by becoming thrilled and thoroughly enjoying the process. To wit, the devotee’s whole ‘self’ gets involved in remembering and worshipping the Lord in the process of Kirtan.

Kirtan also helps to spread the auspicious aura of spirituality as it is done aloud by way of singing, recitation and chanting, rather than remembering and worshipping the Lord God silently by the devotee.

*So it is said that ‘Kirtan brings the devotee closer to his Lord God’ because the Lord loves him exceedingly; this devotee becomes a favourite of the Lord as he not only attains spiritual bliss himself but he also helps others to have it by making them participate in the singing and chanting of the Lord’s glories and names.]

२ / २ / ३ अन्तराले तु शेषाः स्युरुपास्यादौ च काण्डत्वात् ॥ ५८ ॥

2 / 2 / 3 antarālē tu śēṣāḥ syurupāsyādaṁ ca kāṇḍatvāt || 58||

(2/2/3) All other forms of worship and service offered to the Lord God are of equal importance, and they all contribute towards the spiritual objective of attaining maturity of devotion (Bhakti) that leads to eternal bliss, beatitude and ecstasy that comes with God-realisation. All forms of devotion lead to the same spiritual goal,

they are all parts of the composite body known as ‘Bhakti’; this is also the conclusion drawn by the different units of the scriptures (ca kāṇḍatvāt). (58)

[Besides the two tools mentioned in previous verse nos. 56-57, i.e. ‘Bhajan’ and ‘Kirtan’, there are other equally important spiritual tools that are available to a devotee. These have been enumerated in Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, Canto 9, from verse no. 13—to verse no. 29.

Briefly they are the following: Vrat (keeping religious vows and observing sacraments), Namaskar (to bow before the Lord God or his image), Dhyan (contemplation and remembering the Lord God and his various forms, their virtues and glories), Yaag (offering formal forms of worship as done in rites and rituals), Daan (making charity and giving alms and donation in the name of the Lord God and as a service rendered unto him), Arpan (offering all deeds and their rewards to the Lord God, and not personally expecting anything by way of reward for doing auspicious deeds), and so on. It ought to be noted here that all these tools of Bhakti are dedicated to worshipping the ‘manifested form of the Supreme Being’. Refer: verse nos. 46-55 in this context.

Not only this, even Gyan (knowledge, enlightenment and self-realisation) and Yoga (meditation) are equally important tools for the maturity of Bhakti as they guide the devotee to the primary form of the Supreme Being, the cosmic form of the Lord that is known as Brahm and which represents pure cosmic Consciousness, whom he worships through the Lord’s manifested or revealed form by adopting the various other tools mentioned herein above.

To wit, the chief aim of all methods of worship and service rendered to the Supreme Being is the same—and it is to provide eternity to the soul of the individual creature, grant him bliss and beatitude, and free it from the cycle of birth and death which leads to emancipation and salvation of the creature. **The Upanishads that mark the culmination of the wisdom contained in the Vedas too speak of the same thing.]**

२ / २ / ४ ताभ्यः पावित्र्यमुपक्रमात् ॥ ५९ ॥

2 / 2 / 4 tābhyaḥ pāvitryamupakramāt || 59||

(2/2/4) All these different ways of worshipping and having devotion for the Lord God (as outlined in the previous verses) are equally effective and purifying for the soul of the devotee. (59)

[This fact has been endorsed in Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 9/2, where it is said: “This knowledge of the two forms of the Supreme Being, i.e. the cosmic form known as ‘Nirguna’ as it has no attributes, and the manifested form known as ‘Saguna’ as it has known attributes, provides true blessedness to the Jiva (living being) as it removes all chances of doubts, contradictions and confusions. Hence, this knowledge is supreme. It is sovereign knowledge; it is supremely holy and liberating as it eliminates all delusions; it is blissful because whatever forms the aspirant chooses to worship the Lord God in accordance with his individual temperament and mental liking, he knows that the same Supreme Being is being worshipped and served by him. All in all, such wisdom grants joy to the devotee and he feels happy and contented.”

The devotee feels reassured that the method he has personally chosen to worship his beloved Lord God is not inferior to any other method, that he will get the same spiritual reward that is got by pursuing other so-called superior paths—because all the paths lead to the same goal!

In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 2/46, Lord Krishna says: “Different purposes are served by different small reservoirs of water, but a large lake serves all purposes at once. Similarly, different paths such as Yoga and Gyan may be employed for attaining different goals in life, but a man of wisdom alone knows that the true purpose and the best use of all these paths is to attain God-realisation and final beatitude. To wit, the enlightened person has the same use of the knowledge of the scriptures as the person who is surrounded by water on all sides, as he need not go anywhere to quench his thirst. So therefore, the enlightened person realises that the ultimate goal of the teaching of all the scriptures is self and Brahm realisation that grants eternity, bliss and beatitude as well as liberation and deliverance to the soul, and so he may pick up any method that suits him with the assurance that the result would be the same.”]

२ / २ / ५ तासु प्रधानयोगात् फलाधिक्यमेके ॥ ६० ॥

2 / 2 / 5 tāsū pradhānayōgāt phalādhikyamēkē || 60||

(2/2/5) Since attaining maturity in God-realisation with its attendant bliss and beatitude is the ultimate and the chief aim of all spiritual practices of which Bhakti (devotion) is the dominant one, and other methods enumerated herein above (e.g. Bhajan, Kirtan, Yoga, Gyan, etc.) being its important components or tools that aid it, so therefore it follows that if they are all employed judiciously and in the right manner, Bhakti would give a better result and quicker reward to the devotee.

But it ought to be clearly kept in mind that Paraa Bhakti (i.e. the supreme form of Bhakti that refers to complete devotion and love for Lord God) is the chief objective of all spiritual efforts, and these Gauna Bhaktis (secondary forms of Bhakti) will give desired result only if the Paraa Bhakti is robust. (60)

[The meaning is crystal clear. A wise person would not treat any of the spiritual practices as being inferior to any other method as they are all equally important and equally effective for God-realisation in their own way. They are like the many spokes of the wheel which together give shape to the latter, and all the spokes have their own place in the broader scheme of things.

It is also like the many organs of the body of a person. Each organ has its own place and function, and they together make life comfortable and enjoyable for a person. It is not that the person can't do without any single organ, for example it is not that a man would die if he loses his eyes or hands, but surely life would be so much the harder and less comfortable to live in their absence. Similarly, when a wise devotee uses all the components of spiritual practices, such as Gyan, Yoga, Dhyan, Bhajan and Kirtan etc. to realise his spiritual objective, success comes to him easily and more conveniently as opposed to him employing some selected method alone.

But at the same time he must remember that these secondary kinds of Bhaktis would yield result only if the spiritual aspirant has single-minded devotion for Lord God, if he is fully committed and dedicated to the Lord, and employs these different forms of secondary Bhaktis only as aids towards the fulfilment of the main objective.

To wit, the secondary forms of Bhakti, known as Gauna Bhakti, are subsidiaries to Paraa Bhakti, or the main form of Bhakti; they are tools for realisation of Bhakti in its best form. In this context refer to verse no. 84.]

२ /२ /६ नाम्नेति जैमिनिः सम्भवात् ॥ ६१ ॥

2 / 2 / 6 nāmnēti jaiminiḥ sambhavāt || 61||

(2/2/6) According to the illustrious sage Jaimini, repeating and chanting the Lord's holy name or listening to it being done regularly, with due devotion and faith (nāmnēti), is the way by which success in Bhakti (and God-realisation) can be easily and conveniently achieved. (61)

[The same idea is expressed by sage Valmiki in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 129 when he tells Lord Ram: “Oh Lord! You should dwell in the heart of such persons who regularly repeat or chant your holy name and divine Mantras (spiritual formulas).”]

Refer also to Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 9/14 where Lord Krishna says: “My devotees engage themselves in constantly chanting my divine Name with firmness and steadfastness of mind, with all humility and sincerity, and bowing repeatedly before my form (i.e. my manifested form or its representation in the form of a picture or an image)—verily indeed, this way they attain me.”]

२ /२ /७ अत्राङ्गप्रयोगानां यथाकालसम्भवो गृहादिवत् ॥ ६२ ॥

2 / 2 / 7 atrāṅgaprayōgānām yathākālasambhavō grhādivat || 62||

(2/2/7) The different components of Bhakti and the tools that aid it (such as Bhajan and Kirtan etc. mentioned earlier) should be employed wisely and in the correct way as and when they are needed because they all help the devotee prepare himself to attain maturity in Bhakti (and attain God-realisation with its spiritual reward of eternity, bliss and beatitude). It is just like the case of a wise person planning and collecting all things needed to construct his home. (62)

[When one starts to build his home, he begins to plan and collect all items needed for completing his project. He may need some of the things immediately and some at a later stage, but nevertheless he either actually collects them and keeps them in his stock or else at least gathers information about their availability and price etc. so that they can be acquired at short notice. A wise person never leaves things to chance.

Likewise, a wise devotee would use all tools of Bhakti, such as Bhajan, Kirtan, Gyan, Yoga, Dhyan, Japa etc., in order to reach his spiritual destination. He will not exclude any of them as he knows that all play their own part in the composite structure of spirituality. He may use one or two of the different tools of Bhakti at a given point of time, but he will collect as much knowledge about all of them as possible, such as what they mean, how they are practiced, what are their requirements, and all other relevant details so that when he needs their help he would be ready with it.

For instance, he may fix some moments for doing personal form of worship of the Lord God at his home by silently doing Bhajan in the form of repeating the Lord's holy Mantras, offering prayers, bowing before the Lord's image or portrait, reading from the scriptures that describe the life and times of the Lord's incarnations, etc. Then at some other time he may join a group of people in a congregation to do Kirtan and community worship. At other times he can make charities, or attend religious ceremonies and festivals or participate in formal rituals and rites dedicated to the Lord God. Or else he can preach others about the Lord's glories and divinity if he is qualified enough to do so. The opportunities are endless, and a wise devotee would not shun any one of them. Rather, he would judiciously employ all of them with the singular aim of God-realisation and attainment of liberation and deliverance for his soul.

But it should be clearly understood that everything depends upon the concerned devotee. If he decides against multiple paths to God-realisation and aids to maturity of Bhakti, and rather determines that he would select and follow only one or two paths, then that would also be alright. This fact is clearly endorsed in the following verse no. 63.]

२/२/८ ईश्वरतुष्टरेकोऽपि बली ॥ ६३ ॥

2 / 2 / 8 īśvaratuṣṭērēkō 'pi balī || 63||

(2/2/8) If even one of the different tools or methods listed herein above is employed faithfully and with sincerity to pursue devotion for the Lord God, then that particular method is enough to please the Lord (īśvaratuṣṭa). (63)

[In the previous verse nos. 56-62 we have read that there are many methods by which a devotee can worship the Lord God, and that all can be judiciously employed for success.

Now in this verse we learn that though it is true that all the different methods can be successfully employed to attain God-realisation and lead to maturity in Bhakti, but this does not mean that it is compulsory to use all of them, or that it is a binding doctrine that ought to be followed by all the devotees. For it has also been said that all of them are equally effective and powerful. So it follows that if the devotee decides to follow only one of these paths over others, then he is welcomed to do so because if he follows his chosen path diligently and with due faith, then the Lord would be fully pleased with him in the same way as he would have been pleased with the devotee if he would have used more than one path.

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36, Lord Ram has listed nine forms of Bhakti. The Lord says that if a person has 'even one' of these nine forms of Bhakti in him then he is loved by the Lord.

Similarly we read in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇ, 7/5/23 that Prahalad has taught about the nine forms of Bhakti. If a devotee practices any of these forms of Bhakti he attains the Lord God and is loved by him.]

२/२/९ अबन्धोऽर्पणस्य मुखम् ॥ ६४ ॥

2 /2 /9 abandhō 'rpaṇasya mukham || 64||

(2/2/9) The deeds that are selflessly offered to the Lord God do not create any kind of entanglements or fetters for the doer (i.e. the devotee) because no result, either good or bad, of such deeds accrues to the doer. He is freed from the chain of 'cause and effect'; so he attains liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death.

Since such deeds do not create any sort of fetter or bondage for the devotee, it is a tool of Bhakti. (64)

[In this context, refer verse no. 71 also. If one does selfless service to the Lord God and offers all his deeds and their results or fruits to the Lord unconditionally, the devotee is deemed to be practicing Bhakti. It is because he has neutralised all his desires and expectations as he does not want anything in return for his deeds and actions, he has overcome all worldly temptations and attachments which usually impel a person to get involved in doing deeds and taking some action for the realisation of his desires and dreams in the first place. Instead, he has focused his mind and heart on the Lord. This is indeed the aim of Bhakti.

The way to emancipation and salvation is complete self-surrender to the Lord God. A person who has surrendered himself to his master cannot own anything for himself, including the results that are got by carrying out the master's orders. Similarly, the devotee who has surrendered himself and his deeds to the Lord is not held responsible for the effects of his actions and deeds. His soul remains free from all consequences.

This verse deals with the theory of 'Karma' which states that every deed done by an individual produces some result for him. If he does anything with the hope of getting something in return, he gets emotionally attached to that deed, to his actions. The result may be to his liking and expectation, or it may be not. In both the cases, however, the person remains deeply involved in the chain symbolised by the doing of deeds and their consequences.

It is not easy not to expect anything from the deeds done and to be neutral towards their consequences, for otherwise one would not be inclined to do anything at all. In this world that is kept alive and active by the 'doing of deeds and taking of actions', it is not possible in practical terms to remain indifferent to deeds and their results. More often than not, such deeds become mechanical and robot-like, and this is not the way true service is done; it is not the correct way of doing anything wisely. So how does one break free from this endless chain of doing deeds and either enjoying or suffering from its consequences? How would one find liberation and deliverance from this trap to get eternal peace and happiness for his soul?

This verse seeks to address this problem. Its advice is simple and straightforward: One should offer all the deeds done by him to the Lord God, and treat his deeds as his service to the Lord. He must think that he is simply obeying the Lord's orders because it is the Lord who wants him to do certain things. Like a servant carrying out his master's commands and not expecting the result of what he has done to accrue to him personally, except that his master will be pleased with him if he does things properly and diligently, the devotee too does what comes his way for the sake of his Lord God, for the sake of pleasing his beloved Lord who is also his Master. Then he is not worried about the outcome of such deeds. That translates into his being free from the many worries and anxieties associated with doing any deed, either worrying about his failure or being anxious of achieving success in his efforts. Instead of the common forms of problems faced by a person who gets mentally and

emotionally involved in doing of deeds, the devotee, on the other hand, gets a bonus and a pat on his back in the form of the Lord's grace and benediction upon him for a job well done, and done selflessly!

Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 18/66 says: "Take refuge in me, the almighty Lord of the world, and surrender all your deeds and duties to me. If you do so, then don't worry for I shall absolve you of all your sins."

A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha nos. 129 and 131 where sage Valmiki tells Lord Ram: "Oh Lord! A person who does everything and then offers them to you, wanting nothing but affection for your holy feet, verily indeed the heart of such a person is your dwelling place." "Oh Lord! A person who does not want anything at all for himself, and has unwavering faith and affection for you, his heart is your residence."]

२/२/१० ध्याननियमस्तु दृष्टसौकर्यात् ॥ ६५ ॥

2 / 2 / 10 dhyānaniyamastu dr̥ṣṭasaukaryāt || 65||

(2/2/10) The importance of 'Dhyan' (contemplation; deep thought; concentration and focusing of the mind attentively on an object; constant and attentive remembrance of the Lord God) in the realm of Bhakti is that it helps one to focus his mind on the Lord God, to remember the Lord constantly and persistently at all times of his life, and to turn his mind away from the world and its temptations and instead concentrate its efforts towards God-realisation.

It is for this obvious reason that one should diligently practice Dhyan properly in order to succeed in Bhakti. (65)

[One should try all available methods in order to attain purity of mind and fixing it on the objective—which here is God-realisation through the path of Bhakti. Refer verse no. 27 in this context. Earlier we have read about Bhajan and Kirtan in verse nos. 56-57, about Gyan and Yoga in verse nos. 16-17 and 19, and about other means in verse no. 58 which all aid Bhakti. And now in the present verse no. 65 we see that 'Dhyan' is another important tool of Bhakti.

In conventional terms, 'Dhyan' is a vital component in the system of doing Yoga (meditation). It generally refers to contemplation and deep thought that are needed for success in meditation. Since Dhyan helps the ascetic to attain success in Yoga, so now this verse uses its benefits for the purpose of getting success in Bhakti.

To wit, if a devotee is able to keep his mind focused on the memory of his beloved Lord God, if he contemplates upon the Lord and meditates upon him, if he manages to deeply think of the Lord and make him an important component of his sub-conscious mind, then it becomes easy for the devotee to focus his conscious mind on the Lord at all times of his life. His life then becomes fully dedicated to the Lord God, and he remembers the Lord while he is awake as well as while he is asleep. This means he has become inseparable and indistinguishable from his Lord, his whole being has been possessed by the Lord and his thoughts, and he thinks of nothing but the Lord—which is indeed the intent of Bhakti, for Bhakti aims to remove the distance and distinction between the devotee and the Lord God.]

२/२/११ तद्यजिः पूजायामितरेषां नैवम् ॥ ६६ ॥

2 / 2 / 11 tadyajihḥ pūjāyāmitarēṣāṁ naivam || 66||

(2/2/11) The root word ‘Yaja’ (tadyajihḥ) is usually interpreted to mean ‘sacrifices’ when it is used by the scriptures (such as the Vedas) which deal elaborately with the fire sacrifices. But actually it is not so (naivam). [Its correct meaning and interpretation is different.] It actually refers to the ‘worship that is offered to the Supreme Being’ (selflessly, and as a means of self-surrender rather than to fulfil any of desire by the performer of the sacrifice or worship). (66)

[The root word ‘Yaja’ is used to denote different rituals during fire sacrifices where offerings are made to different patron gods. These fire sacrifices are usually done for fulfilment of some desire. This desire may be worldly or spiritual, but nevertheless it is a ‘desire’, a wish that needs to be fulfilled by propitiating certain gods by offering oblations and libations to them through the means of the fire sacrifice. But the actual ‘offering’ and the actual ‘sacrifice’ is one where the individual offers his own self to the Lord God and expects nothing in return. Then the Supreme Lord, being most compassionate, gracious, benevolent, beneficent, merciful and kind, feels obliged to grant as much largesse as he can upon the person who has unconditionally surrendered everything to him, even if it for the sake of upholding his own reputation as being the greatest of all the Lords and Gods in creation. So the Lord showers his benediction upon the devotee and grants him eternal bliss, beatitude and felicity. Not limited to this alone, the Lord ensures that the devotee finds liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death, and his soul attains final emancipation and salvation.

Verily indeed, this is the eclectic reward that the Supreme Lord gives to the devotee who understands the true meaning of making offerings and doing sacrifices. On the other hand, those who are of a low intellect and lack in proper wisdom remain trapped in the cycle of doing this and that sacrifices, making this and that offerings to this and that god, yet achieve nothing worthwhile.

The greatest and the biggest proof of not fully understanding the meaning and intent of the ‘Yajas’, or offerings and sacrifices, as prescribed by the scriptures is that the individual needs to do them again and again because he does not find full contentment and fulfilment of desires by doing such fire sacrifices for any number of times. On the other hand, if he understands the true meaning and purpose of the ‘Yaja’, then he would surrender himself before the Lord God and ask for nothing in return. The result would be that he will find eternity of peace and bliss that will leave no room for any more wants; he will attain a sense of extreme spiritual blessedness that liberates him from all wants forever.

This idea is also expressed in Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 9/23-25, where Lord Krishna tells Arjun: “Those who have Bhakti inside them (i.e. in their heart) but use this virtue to worship gods other than the Supreme Being (in the hope of fulfilment of certain desires), then though it is true that they are worshipping me in these forms yet this kind of worship is not the proper way to worship me. Since such worshippers are deluded under the influence of Maya because they do not recognise who I am (as they worship other Gods instead of directly worshipping me), they fall back into the cycle of transmigration instead of breaking free from it and attaining deliverance. This is because those who worship other Gods go to them (and all these Gods are said to preside over different aspects of creation that are assigned to them, but surely not the

supreme state of beatitude and blessedness that is the sole realm of Brahm). Only those who worship me (the Supreme Being) come to me to get final deliverance.”

In the context of Bhakti, or having devotion for the Lord God, this kind of ‘Yaja’—i.e. offering of the self, or surrendering of the self to the Lord God—is spiritually far superior to and more rewarding than the different types of material offerings that are made during mechanical rituals in formal worships and fire sacrifices.]

२/२/१२ पादोदकं तु पाद्यमव्याप्तेः ॥ ६७ ॥

2 / 2 / 12 pādōdakam tu pādyamavyāptēḥ || 67||

(2/2/12) The word ‘Padodak’ (pādōdakam) refers to the water that is used to wash the feet of the Lord God. But it is not practically possible to ‘actually’ wash the Lord’s physical feet as the Lord is not present before the worshipper. So therefore, even a mental offering of any kind, even of one’s own self, at the holy feet of the Lord God is deemed to be equivalent to actual worshipping of the Lord as done during formal worshipping rituals. (67)

[During the process of formal worshipping rituals, water is used to wash the feet of the deity being worshipped. Then this water is distributed by the priest amongst the worshippers as a holy and sanctified liquid which is said to have some sacred powers. Sage Shandilya invokes this tradition to stress that it is merely a mechanical ritual as no one has actually seen the Lord nor was the Lord actually present at the time when his feet was being ritually washed.

To wit, just like the case of ‘Yaja’ as explained in previous verse no. 66, the real meaning of ‘Padodak’, or the offering of water to wash the Lord God’s feet, is to mentally honour the Lord and welcome him reverentially to take a seat right inside one’s own heart. This ‘water’ or ‘Padodak’ should be in the form of ‘tears’ that fall spontaneously from one’s eyes as he remembers the Lord and feels ecstatic by this thought. If this happens, i.e. if one can reverentially wash the Lord’s feet by the natural water of love and affection that is produced by his eyes in the form of ‘tears’, then it is deemed that such a devotee has actually offered real-time ‘Padodak’ to the Lord.

In the context of Bhakti, or having devotion for the Lord God, this kind of ‘Padodak’—i.e. the tears of love and affection for the Lord—is spiritually far superior to and more rewarding than the plain water that is used in mechanical rituals during formal worship.]

२/२/१३ स्वयमर्पितं ग्राह्यमविशेषात् ॥ ६८ ॥

2 / 2 / 13 svayamarpitam grāhyamaviśēṣāt || 68||

(2/2/13) #When one surrenders one’s own ‘self’ to the Lord God, then it is the best and the supreme form of offering indeed. [Nothing is better or superior to that.] Just like the case that anything which has been offered to a deity no more belongs the worshipper, once the devotee offers himself to his Lord God, he has no right

whatsoever on his 'own self'. [To wit, now onwards, the devotee's 'self' belongs to the 'supreme Self' represented by the Lord God. Indeed, this eclectic state is equivalent to the 'devotee being one with the Lord himself'.]

{*This verse can be interpreted and read also as follows: "The offerings that are made to a deity become holy and purified, and hence become worthy of acceptance by the devotees of the Lord God. Hence, when a devotee offers himself to the Lord, he indeed becomes worthy of respect and acceptance by one and all."} (68)

[#When something is offered during formal worship rituals, the person who has made this offering has no more claim over it. The thing offered is now shared amongst the worshippers without distinction.

This principle is invoked here in the context of Bhakti to mean that once the devotee truly offers or surrenders himself to the Lord God he loves, he has no right to claim any independent identity, for now onwards he belongs to the Lord; he is Lord's. This means that when a devotee has truly understood the meaning of Bhakti, he would no longer treat himself as an independent individual who is separate from his beloved Lord, but he will think that he is "Lord's". To wit, at the culmination of Bhakti, the distinction between the devotee and the Lord God he worships is removed.

*If we carefully examine this eclectic state of spiritual existence we will see that offering of deeds to the Lord God as mentioned in verse no. 64, and other symbolic offerings as mentioned in verse nos. 66-67, all culminate in total surrender before the Lord: their aim is complete surrender of the devotee before the Lord he worships so much so that the devotee ceases to be an independent person. He ceases to have an independent identity or existence of his own, for now he belongs to his Lord God, and his identity is directly linked to the Lord himself. It is just like the case of a servant who is known and recognised by the name and majesty of the master he serves. The servant no longer has an independent stature of any kind of his own. This servant gets his respect and recognition in the society by the virtue of his being a servant of a certain great master who is highly respected and deeply revered by one and all in the society. Likewise, a true devotee derives his strength and powers by the virtue of Bhakti that he has for the Supreme Lord.]

२/२/१४ निमित्तगुणाव्यपेक्षणादपराधेषु व्यवस्था ॥ ६९ ॥

2 / 2 / 14 nimittaguṇāvyapēkṣaṇādaparādhēṣu vyavasthā || 69||

(2/2/14) There may be occasions when some offense or error or sin that occurs while offering of worship. This offense or error or sin may be intentional, inadvertent or accidental. There are methods for expiation to neutralise their negative effects, and these methods depend upon the type of offense or error or sin committed. (69)

[One may commit some offense out of free will during worship in order to insult the deity, or to test the effectiveness of the worship that is being offered, to see if the errors that he has committed purposely really affect the outcome of the worship, or is such worship merely a ritual with no actual fruit. All such things are deemed to be sinful and offensive in worship.

In other instances, a person may commit some sin or offence or error without any knowledge that he is doing anything wrong. Then there may be cases when

something goes wrong accidentally or by providence, over which no one has any control and which no one can even predict so as to take precautions against.

Out of these three situations, the offense that is made or the sin that is committed by accident is the least harmful; that which happens inadvertently is of the medium kind and its harmful consequences are not too grave; but that which is done intentionally are very serious, and they have grave and long-lasting negative impact upon the offender.

Refer also to verse no. 74 which tells us that sins and other spiritual offenses can be remedied or neutralised by doing ‘Smaran’ (remembering the Lord, his glories and his holy name), ‘Kirtan’ (singing the Lord’s glories and holy name), ‘Katha-Srawan’ (hearing the divine stories of the Lord), and other such methods.

Varaha Puran, chapter 25, verse no. 36 lists thirty-two such sins or faults in worship. The Vishnu Puran, Part 2, Canto 6 describes the different ‘hells’ and the numerous types of sins that condemn a person to them.]

२ / २ / १५ पत्रादेर्दानमन्यथा हि वैशिष्ट्यम् ॥ ७० ॥

2 / 2 / 15 patrādērdānamanyathā hi vaiśiṣṭayam || 70||

(2/2/15) Even if a simple thing as a leaf or a flower is offered by the devotee to the Lord God with love and devotion then it is cheerfully accepted by the Lord as if it was a special kind of gift or offering made to him.* (70)

[The idea is very simple and straightforward: The Lord is so kind and graceful that he does not need elaborate worship or expensive offerings to be pleased. What he expects is love and devotion in the heart of the devotee. So if a devotee offers a mere leaf, a flower or even plain water, then such offerings are accepted by the Lord delightfully. He treats such offerings as a special kind of gift given to him by his devotee.

A similar idea is expressed in Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 9/26, where Lord Krishna says: “Whosoever offers anything to me with love, even as simple a thing as a leaf or a flower, I gladly appear before this pure-hearted and dispassionate devotee to cheerfully accept his offerings for me because they have been made with love.”

We read in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 129 that sage Valmiki advises Lord Ram to live in the heart of those devotees who accept anything, even the food that they eat, the clothes that they wear etc., after it has first been offered to the Lord God as then such things become sanctified and holy, and the devotee exults that what he has got has come to him by the Lord’s grace and benediction.”

*This verse can be interpreted in a different way also. During religious ceremonies and sacrifices, the patron who presides over them holds some flowers and leaves in his hands while making oblations to the deity being worshipped or making offerings to the sacred fire itself. These flowers and leaves are symbolic of reverence and honour shown to the deity or the sacred fire. Once an offering is made in this way, the things that are offered belong to the deity being worshipped.

Likewise, if one gives charities, alms and donations in a similar manner, then they are also deemed to be equivalent to sacred offerings made during the sacrifice, and the spiritual rewards that accrue to the giver of such charities, alms and donations

are also special because they are equivalent to a selfless service done to the Lord God, on behalf of the Lord and for the Lord.

This tradition is being invoked in this verse to say that when a devotee makes selfless charities or gives alms and donations with the thought that he is doing it as a service to his Lord God, that he is making these charities and giving these donations as offerings to his Lord, then they become a form of his selfless worship of the Lord. Hence, the person gets special spiritual rewards for such charities, alms or donations made in the name of the Lord God.

Such auspicious deeds, if done in a proper way, become a form of Bhakti for the devotee. The Lord duly blesses him. Refer also to verse nos. 58, 67-68 in this context.]

२/२/१६ सुकृतजत्वात् परहेतुभावाच्च क्रियासु श्रेयस्यः ॥ ७१ ॥

2 / 2 / 16 sukr̥tajatvāt parahē tubhāvācca kriyāsu śrēyasyaḥ || 71||

(2/2/16) If one does selfless deeds, with a pure and auspicious mind, for the good of others, then such deeds are regarded as the best deeds done, and consequentially their rewards would be also the best in spiritual terms.

[This verse can also be interpreted and read as follows: “If one gives something to others, and if the thing given has been acquired by auspicious and righteous means, then this method of giving is of an excellent kind, and so are its results in spiritual terms.”] (71)

[In this context, refer also to verse no. 64. Two points are to be noted here: one is that only things that have been acquired by rightful means should be offered to the Lord God or given as charity for his sake or as a service rendered unto him; and two, that such deeds should be done selflessly and with a pure mind that is free from any wordly corruptions. Only then does a devotee become entitled for any worthwhile spiritual rewards; only then such deeds or offerings give him auspicious results by way of getting freedom from the cycle of ‘cause and effect’, the ever-turning cycle of Karma (deed) and its results which trap a creature endlessly.

So, merely doing worship of the Lord God, or offering one’s deeds and their results to the Lord would not yield any spiritual reward of any worth if one did not follow the guideline of this verse. If he does follow the instructions as laid down in this present verse then he accumulates spiritual merit that stands him in good stead and leads him to his aim of attaining freedom from the cycle of transmigration that revolves around the Theory of Karma.

What is this ‘Theory of Karma?’ Briefly it states that a person who does some deed or takes any action with the hope of any result from them, then he gets mentally and emotionally attached to such deeds and actions. Since one desire leads to another in an endless cycle, since all the desires cannot be fully fulfilled in a person’s single life, and since some of the results of deeds and actions done during the lifetime still remain due at the time of a person’s death, his soul has to take another birth to finish the unfinished task of the previous birth, and either enjoying or suffering from the results of the past deeds and actions. In the new birth fresh deeds are done, which in turn generate new results, and these add up with the previous ones to build up a formidable balance of spiritual merits or demerits for the soul. The trap gets stronger and deeper unless the person is wise enough to start dismantling this structure from its

very root—and the way to do is not to get involved in any new deed and accumulate any new result in the present life. How is it made possible? Well, the answer lies in doing deeds selflessly and offering them and their results to the Lord God. Since a devotee acts like a servant who merely does what he is told to do by his master, the devotee who thinks that he is merely doing what the Lord requires him to do would not accumulate any result of the deeds done by him. By-and-by he is freed from the trap of ‘deeds’.

Countless fish live in the holy water of the sacred river Ganges, and flocks of pigeons and other birds live in temples and other shrines. Do they get liberation and salvation; do they feel blessed and spiritually rewarded? The answer is ‘no’. Merely living in the sacred water does not provide any spiritual reward to the fish, nor does living in a sacred place such as a temple give any benefit to the bird. Likewise, merely offering worship to the Lord God or doing charity in the Lord’s name would not give the necessary spiritual reward to a person if it is not done with love and devotion for the Lord God, and further, this love and devotion should be sincere and true, and not as a pretension of being a holy person to get honour and respect in the world!]

२ / २ / १७ गौणं त्रैविध्यमितरेण स्तुत्यर्थत्वात् साहचर्यम् ॥ ७२ ॥

2 / 2 / 17 gaṇam traividhyamitarēṇa stutyarthatvāt sāhacaryam || 72||

(2/2/17) These different ways of worshipping or serving the Lord God (as enumerated in the forgoing verses) are called ‘Gauna Bhakti’ or the secondary forms of Bhakti. This Gauna Bhakti is of three types (gaṇam traividhyamitarēṇa): viz. Aarta Bhakti, Jigyāsa Bhakti, and Arthaathirtha Bhakti (Ārta Bhakti, Jijñāsā Bhakti, and Arthārthitā Bhakti).

Although these three kinds of Bhaktis are said to be secondary in nature but they have their own importance as they are all meant to be aids in Bhakti. However, the best form of Bhakti that is praised by all is the one that is based on the words of the scriptures, and is therefore called Gyan Bhakti (Jñāna Bhakti). It is because true knowledge and wisdom is the basis of enlightenment and it shows the correct way Bhakti should be practiced. Gyan enlightens the devotee about the true purpose of Bhakti, whom to offer worship, the way Bhakti is to be properly practiced, what are the different ways it can be done, the pitfalls and their precautions, the spiritual rewards that accrue to the devotee, and so on. Hence, Gyan Bhakti is the best companion for the spiritual aspirant. (72)

[‘Aarta Bhakti’ is when one is extremely distressed he takes refuge with the Lord God in order to overcome his sufferings and adverse circumstances, ‘Jigyāsā Bhakti’ is when one has heard about the Lord and wishes to explore more about him and to know what the spiritual rewards of Bhakti are, and so he follows this path more with an intention to examine it than for the sake of love for Lord God, and ‘Arthaarthi Bhakti’ is when one expects any worldly reward from doing Bhakti and offering worship to the Lord.

But the true aim of Bhakti is God-realisation. This would mean establishing a communion between the devotee and the Lord God. Out of all the paths available to a devotee, the best one is said to be the path of ‘Gyan’, known as ‘Gyan Bhakti’, as it enlightens the devotee about every aspect of Bhakti. A person who walks on any path with full knowledge of the path and where it leads to is able to move ahead with

steady steps and confidence. Otherwise, it would be like walking down a blind alley; or travelling on an unknown and uncharted path that creates uncertainties and doubts. Hence the importance of Gyan Bhakti cannot be under estimated.]

२/२/१८ बहिरन्तस्थमुभयमवेष्टिसववत् ॥ ७३ ॥

2 / 2 / 18 bahirantasthamubhayamavēṣṭisavavat || 73||

(2/2/18) The various external forms of Bhakti (such as Kirtan, Bhajan, Japa, Daan, offering of worship etc. as described earlier) have a dual role. They can play a direct and independent role in success of Bhakti by helping the devotee to overcome his sins and their negative consequences by engaging himself in the many exercises that are collectively called ‘Gaun Bhakti’ so as to sufficiently purify himself and become eligible for God-realisation that would lead to spiritual blessedness, or they can play a subsidiary role by helping the devotee to focus his energy and efforts to develop intense internal love and devotion for the Lord God which would directly connect him to the Lord.

Both these roles of Gaun Bhakti, i.e. the direct and the indirect roles, serve the same purpose though—as they both lead to attainment of God-realisation and beatitude. (73)

[The different ways of practicing Gaun Bhakti, or secondary Bhakti, have been enumerated in the previous verses. Some of these ways are Kirtan (verse nos. 57, 63), Bhajan (verse no. 56), Yaja (verse no. 66), Japa (verse no. 61), Karma (verse nos. 64, 71), Dhyan (verse no. 65), Yoga (verse no. 19), making different kinds of offerings (verse nos. 58, 67-68, 70), and so on. All these forms of Bhakti are paths that help the spiritual aspirant to clean his slate of the various sins and evil consequences of his past deeds that hinder his spiritual progress and come in his way of developing true Bhakti or true love and devotion for the Lord God.

The ‘Gaun Bhakti’ helps as an aid to ‘Paraa Bhakti’; it makes Paraa Bhakti steady and more robust; it is a vital tool for attainment of Paraa Bhakti. A devotee would take recourse to Gaun Bhakti when he cannot develop Paraa Bhakti directly in his heart.

So even if a person is not sufficiently spiritually elevated and intellectually wise and enlightened enough to attain God-realisation by understanding that the Supreme Lord lives right inside him as his own Atma or soul, that this Atma is blissful, eternal and pure consciousness, that self-realisation is equivalent to God-realisation that brings bliss, beatitude and felicity in its wake, and therefore one would derive the nectar of spiritual bliss and beatitude not by searching the Lord outside anywhere but by turning inwards for the Lord dwells inside his own ‘self’—he can still reach this supreme spiritual goal by a little bit of practice and help from the various forms of Gaun Bhaktis as enumerated in these verses.]

२/२/१९ स्मृतिकीर्त्योः कथादेशचार्तो प्रायश्चित्तभावात् ॥ ७४ ॥

2 / 2 / 19 smṛtikīrtyōḥ kathādeścārtau prāyaścittabhāvāt || 74||

(2/2/19) Such practices as remembering and singing the Lord God's divine name and glories (*smṛtikīrti*), hearing auspicious stories that narrates the Lord's life and deeds, and other such means that are adopted in practicing Aarta Bhakti (*kathādēśc-ārtau*) are symbolic forms of expiation or repentance (*prāyaścitta-bhāvāt*) that help the devotee overcome the adverse effects of certain circumstances that have caused distress to him. By practicing these methods he becomes entitled to receive the Lord God's grace and benediction. (74)

[Here it ought to be noted that the need to do penance or expiation or repentance in order to atone for some guilt arising from some form of sin or misdeed, or to overcome the adverse circumstances that may have arisen due to any sin done by the devotee during the course of his life in this world, or caused by providence, or due to some error of omission or commission while offering worship to the Lord God and performing some religious duty as referred to in verse no. 69.

The next verse no. 74 further clarifies this point when it says that by invoking the Lord's holy and divine name even the gravest of sins and misdeeds can be neutralised.

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 35, Lord Ram has told Sabari, the old tribal woman who was the Lord's devotee, that listening to the divine stories of the Lord is one of the nine ways by which Bhakti can be practiced.]

२/२/२० भूयसामननुष्ठितिरिति चेदाप्रयाणमुपसंहारान्महत्स्वपि ॥ ७५ ॥

2 / 2 / 20 bhūyasāmananuṣṭhīririti cēdāprayāṇamupasāmhārānmahatsvapi
|| 75||

(2/2/20) Even for expiation or doing repentance for the gravest of sins and misdeeds, one need not do some kind of severe penance (such as doing the Chandrayan Vrata etc.), because remembering the Lord God and chanting his holy name constantly with devotion till the time of death ensures that the person gets liberated from the evil consequences of his sins and misdemeanours of whatever kind they are. (75)

[This verse reassures a devotee that even if he has committed any wrong and finds that he will be unable to do some form of severe of penance to repent for his sins or misdeeds, he has an easy way out of the dilemma. He need not worry because even by invoking the divine form of the Lord God and chanting his holy name he will be able to easily atone for his sins and misdeeds.

This fact is endorsed in Vishnu Purana, 2/6/37-44, which says that the best form of expiation for any kind of sin is the remembrance and chanting of the holy and divine name of the Lord God with steadfastness of devotion and faith. The Lord has many names such as Vasudeo (Krishna), Narayan, Vishnu etc., but the beneficial effects of invoking any of them are the same (verse nos. 39-40, 42). Further, a person can invoke the name of the Lord and remember him any time of the day and night, as all time is auspicious for remembering the Lord God (verse no. 41). Again, a person who keeps his mind steadily fixed on Lord Vasudeo even while he is engaged in doing various religious activities such as doing sacrifices, offering worship, making charity, offering oblations and libations to deities, and so on—he attains the highest state of liberation and deliverance (verse no. 43). Verily indeed, he attains a stature

that is superior to going to heaven as the latter keeps him trapped in the cycle of birth and death while the stature obtained by a devotee of the Lord gives him final beatitude; he attains salvation and emancipation for his soul (verse no. 44).

In Vishnu Puran, 3/7/18, we read that Yama, the god of death, does not torment a devotee of Lord Vishnu who worships the Lord's holy feet with due devotion and purity of mind.

Again, in Vishnu Puran, 3/7/26, we read that Yama leaves alone a devotee of Lord Vishnu whose heart is devotedly fixed on the Lord, and whose inner self has been purified of all impurities such as pride, arrogance, ego, malice and jealousy.

Further, Vishnu Puran, 3/7/32-34, says that Yama does not torment a devotee of Lord Vishnu in whose heart the Lord dwells permanently, and who has taken the shelter of the Lord by surrendering himself to him and begs for the Lord's protection.

In fact, Vishnu Puran, 3/7/38, says that he in whose heart Lord Vishnu lives is protected by the Lord himself so much so that neither Yama (the god of death), nor any of his messengers, nor Yama's baton, or his shackle or any other weapon would be able to harm such a devotee.

Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇ, 11/5/42, says: "If a beloved devotee who has forsaken all other attachments and sought shelter at the holy feet of the Lord incurs any sin for any reason (although as a rule he is so purified that he does not commit any sin), the Supreme Lord Hari, who is enshrined in his heart, washes off all those sins."

Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇ, 11/20/29, says: "He who constantly worships me through the path of devotion is enabled to enthrone me in his heart with the result that I eradicate all of his evil propensities from his heart."

A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 129 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede it, sage Valmiki tells Lord Ram that he should live in the heart of a person who repeats his holy name constantly, who worships the holy feet of the Lord, who has no other support or hope except the Lord, and who wants nothing in return by doing various auspicious deeds except to have affection and devotion for the holy feet of the Lord.

The next verse no. 76 once again reiterates the same basic idea that for a devotee of the Lord God there is no other better option for repentance for sins than to surrender before his Lord, and pray for the Lord's mercy and grace.]

२ / २ / २१ लघ्वपि भक्ताधिकारे महत्क्षेपकमपरसर्वहानात् ॥ ७६ ॥

2 / 2 / 21 laghvapi bhaktādhikārē mahatksēpakamaparasarvahānāt || 76||

(2/2/21) Remembering the Lord God and invoking his grace even once is enough to free the devotee from the gravest of sins and their consequences. It is said that a devotee of the Lord must abandon all other means of expiation, penance or repentance for his sins and misdeeds except to surrender before the Lord and invoke his mercy and grace. (76)

[This verse is an extension of the idea expressed in the previous verse no. 75 that lays stress on having devotion and love for the Lord God, remembering the Lord, chanting his holy name, and invoking the Lord's mercy and grace as a means to repent for sins and misdeeds.

We read in Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 18/66, that: “Surrendering all your duties and responsibilities to me, the all-powerful and all-supporting Lord, take refuge in me along. If you do so then don’t worry, I shall take responsibility to absolve you of all your sins and misdeeds.”

Vishnu Puran, 5/8/19-21, says that by remembering and singing or chanting the holy name of Lord Hari (the Supreme Being; Lord Vishnu) even once, a person is freed from the fear of the gravest of sins; all his sins get dissolved like a metal melting away in a fierce fire; and the greatest of torments of hell are eliminated.

The astounding glory, the stupendous authority and the majestic spiritual value of the Lord’s holy name have been elaborately described in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, from (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 28; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 46; and (b) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 36 (where Lord Ram tells Sabari that repeating the holy Mantra of the Lord with due devotion is one of the nine ways by which Bhakti can be practiced successfully.

Similarly, Vishnu Puran, Part 2, Canto 6, verse nos. 39-44 also emphasise the great importance of remembering, invoking, chanting or repeating the holy name of the Lord God as the sole method for freedom from all torments, spiritual as well as temporal. It is because the Lord immediately attends to the call of his devotee and takes care of his well-being. Of course this requires an exemplary level of faith, depth of conviction and steadfastness in devotion on the part of the devotee for the Lord, and for the Lord’s divinity, holiness, greatness, cosmic authority and omnipotence.]

२ /२ /२२ तत्स्थानत्वादनन्यधर्मः खलेवालीवत् ॥ ७७ ॥

2 / 2 / 22 tatsthānatvādananyadharmah khalēvālivat || 77||

(2/2/22) Since deep love and devotion (Bhakti) for the Lord God ensures that the almighty Lord dwells inside the heart of the devotee, so therefore no other special exercises are needed to be done by the devotee for expiation of his sins or repentance for his misdeeds because Bhakti serves this purpose fully. It is just like case of the post of the threshing floor of the farmer’s yard. (77)

[During a sacrificial ritual, the animal to be sacrificed is tied to a post or a pole. If the ‘post of the threshing floor’ from a farmer’s yard is used for this purpose then one need not worry about the many criteria that are fixed for the proper way a post or a pole is to be selected to tie the sacrificial animal, such as that it should be made octagonal, or made from a particular type of wood, have a certain height etc. It is because the post from the threshing floor is regarded as inherently sanctified, and no further purification of it is needed before it can be used for the purpose of the fire sacrifice. In ancient times, a bull or an ox was tied to a pole around which harvested crop of wheat or rice was piled. When the animal was made to go around this pole, the grain was separated from the stalk by the beating of the hooves of these animals. Another way of separating the grain was to beat bundles of stalk manually against the pole so that the grains fell to the ground.

Likewise, if a person has deep and true devotion for the Lord God then he need not do any special penance for the expiation of his sins, because his devotion and love for the Lord, i.e. his Bhakti, is a great purifier in its own right, and no other purification rite is better or more effective than it. This happens because the Lord

God, the supreme purifier of all, lives right inside the devotee's own heart, making him already purified and holy, and eligible to attain spiritual rewards of bliss and beatitude.

To wit, a true devotee of the Lord God who has enshrined the Lord in his own heart by the virtue of the depth and sincerity of his love, affection and devotion for the Lord, need not take recourse to other methods for attaining spiritual blessedness, for attaining bliss, felicity and beatitude, as these come to him automatically by the grace of the Lord. He may, if he so wishes, engage in doing Kirtan or Bhajan or Dhyan or Japa or Yaja or Daan (verse nos. 56-57, 61-66, 70) or other means of spiritual purification (verse nos. 58, 67-68) etc., but they become superfluous for him.

It is said in Vishnu Puran, 2/6/40-41, that: "If a person regrets for his sins and wishes to repent, then though there are many ways he can do it but the remembrance of the holy name of Lord Vishnu is a complete method for expiation of sins no matter how grave they may be." "If a person invokes the holy name of the Lord anytime of the day or night, his sins are neutralised immediately."]

२ / २ / २३ आनिन्द्ययोन्यधिक्रियते पारम्पर्यात् सामान्यवत् ॥ ७८ ॥

2 / 2 / 23 ānindyayōnyadhikriyatē pāramparyāt sāmānyavat || 78||

(2/2/23) Everyone, from the highest born to the lowest, has an equal right to have spiritual peace, happiness, bliss and beatitude that comes with Bhakti. To wit, in the spiritual path of Bhakti it has been an established tradition that everyone has equal right, no matter what his birth or race or caste or belief is, or what custom he follows. It is just like the case of everyone having equal right to life, and to live a life of righteousness and auspiciousness, to follow the meritorious path of truth, abstinence from violence, renunciation, detachment, non-possession, equanimity etc. Verily, this is the considered view of Authorities on this subject such as great sages and saints. (78)

[Every living person has the right to be a good person. It is obvious and an unsaid law. Similarly, it goes without saying that every person has a right to have devotion, love and affection for the Lord God, and to derive spiritual bliss and beatitude by it. It also goes without saying that every living being has the right to attain liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. There is no discrimination in this.

So therefore this verse says that the path of Bhakti that revolves around having devotion, love and affection for the Lord God and complete surrendering before him, and its supporting methods such as Kirtan, Bhajan, Japa, Dhyan, Yoga, Yaja etc., are open to one and all, without any discrimination whatsoever.

It is also like the case of the huge Banyan tree that does not discriminate between anyone while giving its shade. Like this tree that gives refuge to all and provides them shade, the Lord too gives refuge to all and shows his benediction on everyone without discrimination.

Narada Bhakti Sutra, verse no. 72, also says: "Birth, scholarship, external appearance, wealth and occupation etc. make no difference for having devotion for the Lord God."

We read in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇ, 11/14/20, that: "I, who am the beloved of self-realised souls, am attainable only through exclusive devotion. Single-

minded and unswerving devotion to me absolves even the untouchables, e.g. those who may cook and eat the flesh of dogs, from the stigma attached to their births.”

Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 9/32, Lord Krishna says: “Persons who take complete shelter in me alone, whoever they may be, such as those who are born from the sinful wombs of women (as such being born as outcastes or fallen men known as Mlecchas or Yavanas), or may be of any caste such as Vaishyas (members of the trading community) and Sudras (members of the labour class)—all of them attain the supreme state of spiritual blessedness and beatitude by the virtue of their single-minded devotion to me.”]

२/२/२४ अतो ह्यविपक्वभावानामपि तल्लोके ॥ ७९ ॥

2 / 2 / 24 atō hyavipakvabhāvānāmapi tallōkē || 79||

(2/2/24) Hence, even those who have not attained the highest state of enlightenment and self-realisation, or whose spiritual efforts have not matured and bear the desired fruits for them, they too can practice Bhakti for the Lord God in whatever simple way they can in this world. (79)

[Bhakti is a simple and straightforward way that leads to God-realisation and attainment of spiritual blessedness. No special efforts are to be made or vows are to be kept in it, and one need not even abandon his duties in this world in order to follow the path of Bhakti. If one simply surrenders himself unconditionally before the Lord God and offers everything to him, if one simply begins to love the Lord and have complete faith in him, if he is completely devoted to the Lord and has no other succour or solace anywhere except the Lord—then all his spiritual objectives are deemed to be fulfilled. The merciful, graceful and ever-obliging Lord takes care of him.

To wit, even if one has not attained the highest level of purification and self-realisation, even if one has not done severe penances or sacrifices, even if one has not attained success in meditation and contemplation or any other spiritual practice, but if he has Bhakti (devotion and love) for the Lord God in him then he is deemed to have done all these, and thus become eligible for liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 6/37-40, we read: “Arjuna asks Lord Krishna, ‘What happens to a person who has faith but is not able to overcome passions, and therefore his mind gets diverted from the path of Yoga (meditation and contemplation) so that he does not reach perfection in it. As he has strayed from the path leading to God-realisation and has nothing to support him, is such a person not like shreds of clouds floating aimlessly in the sky, neither being able to have God-realisation nor being able to enjoy the sensual pleasures of the world? Oh Lord, please remove my doubts.’ Lord Krishna replied, ‘Oh Arjun, listen! He who is endowed with devotion for the Lord God never falls from the path leading to beatitude and perfection; he never suffers either here or hereafter.’”]

२/२/२५ क्रमैकगत्युपपत्तेस्तु ॥ ८० ॥

2 /2 /25 kramaikagatyupapattēstu || 80||

(2/2/25) Thus, those who could not attain maturity in Bhakti but are diligently following it will attain the highest stature of spiritual blessedness in a gradual manner, whether it is obtained in one generation or many generations, but those who have attained maturity in Bhakti attain God-realisation forthwith in this life itself. (80)

[This verse teaches us to remain steady in the path of Bhakti. One should not abandon Bhakti midway because he has not got the fruit of God-realisation immediately. He must remember that everything takes time to mature. A person sows a seed but he has to wait till the seed produces a tree and fruits ripen on it; he can't eat the fruit immediately after sowing the seed!

We read in Mahabharat, Shanti Parva, Canto 394, verse nos. 13383-89 that: "Those whose hearts are untainted and neutral to either virtues or vices, whose minds are perfectly tranquil and self-controlled, such single-minded devotees do attain Lord Vasudeo."

In Mahabharat, Shanti Parva, Canto 350, verse nos. 13548-50, we read: "Those whose sins have been burnt, those who have overcome virtues and vices alike, they follow the spiritual paths as prescribed in the scriptures, and gradually progress in them to finally attain the state of beatitude and God-realisation. However, those who follow the path of unstinted devotion for Lord Narayan (the Supreme Being) straightaway attain this eclectic spiritual stature without having to go through the process."

In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 18/55-56, Lord Krishna says: "Through supreme devotion for me my devotee comes to realise me, and thus he becomes one with me immediately. However, for others who are engaged in the affairs of the world but offer everything to me and depend upon me, they too come to me to attain eternity and perfection (**but it is a gradual process**)."

The next verse no. 81 further elaborates on this principle.]

२ /२ /२६ अत्क्रान्तिस्मृतिवाक्यशेषाच्च ॥ ८१ ॥

2 /2 /26 atkrāntismṛtīvākyaśēṣācca || 81||

(2/2/26) Even the scriptures endorse this view that those who have attained perfection in having undiluted and deep Bhakti for the Lord God attain liberation and deliverance immediately, but for those who have not attained such perfection a gradual and step-by-step path is prescribed. (81)

[In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 8/14-15, Lord Krishna tells Arjun: "He who always thinks of me with a focused and undivided mind, who remains absorbed in me, to him I am easily attainable. Exalted souls who have attained highest level of perfection come to me to attain eternity, and for them there is no re-birth, which is the cause of all sorrows and is transient by nature."

Then a little later Lord Krishna shows the destiny of those who do not have perfection in Bhakti. In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 8/24-25, he describes the path they take after death: "He follows the path led by the Fire-God who is all-effulgent in nature, or other deities whom he had worshipped in life. He follows these paths to finally reach the abode of the Supreme Being who lives in heaven. Others follow a

different path that takes them to the lower heaven presided over by the Moon God. They abide there for some time, enjoying its pleasures, and then come back to the mortal world.”

In Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 8/16, Lord Krishna says: “All the worlds, right from the abode of the creator Brahma to the mortal world, are liable to come and go as everything in creation is transient. But for those who attain me, there is no re-birth. Hence they attain eternity.”

So we see that final liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration is easy to attain by following the path of Bhakti as compared to other paths prescribed by different scriptures.]

२/२/२७ महापातकिनां त्वार्तौ ॥ ८२ ॥

2 / 2 / 27 mahāpātakinām tvārtau || 82||

(2/2/27) Even the worst and the greatest of sinners have the right to seek the Lord God’s mercy and grace just like those who are in grave distress and seek the Lord’s intervention to save themselves from the horrors and miseries they face. Indeed the Lord grants them their wishes, and blesses them so that they have devotion for the Lord to ensure that they are not subjected to the same ill-fate again. (82)

[When anyone is in great distress and suffering a lot, he fervently prays to the Lord God to help him out of his miserable condition. And the merciful Lord obliges immediately by not only eliminating the cause of distress but also blessing the person with the gift of Bhakti, the magnificent gift of devotion and love for the Lord God that would shield the person from the attack of miseries and troubles in the future. The Lord effectively grants the devotee the umbrella of his protection. We have two well-known examples of this: one is the story of Draupadi and the other is that of Vibhishan. Draupadi invoked Lord Krishna as a last resort when she was being publicly disrobed in full royal court. Then and there Lord Krishna had assumed the form of a seamless piece of cloth that wrapped Draupadi from all sides so that her modesty and self-respect were protected instantly. In the other case of Vibhishan, when he was kicked out by his own elder brother Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, he was in utter distress as his life was in danger and he had no where to go. So he immediately came to Lord Ram and surrendered before him. The merciful Lord immediately accepted him and granted him immunity from all fears.

We may cite one more well-known incident in this regard: it’s the story of ‘Gajraj’. He was the king of elephants. Once when he was taking a bath in a river, a ferocious crocodile caught hold of his foot and began to pull him in the water. The elephant king first tried all his might to pull himself away, but when he failed in his effort and was about to be drowned he plucked a lotus flower from the river and offered it to Lord Vishnu even as he said his last prayer. The Lord immediately rushed to protect him from death; he cut-off the crocodile’s head and saved the elephant.

The above three examples are of devotees who had prayed to the Lord God when they were in grave distress that required an urgent invocation of the Lord. The Lord had however granted them immediate relief even though they had not remembered the Lord out of any kind of devotion or love for him at that particular moment. The point to note here is that though they were not sinners, yet they did not

surrender to the Lord out of any Bhakti for him. But still the Lord did not waste time to save them.

This verse teaches us that the same thing would happen to great sinners if they honestly turn to the Lord God, seeking forgiveness and mercy. The gracious Lord would not only absolve them of their misdeeds but also grant them the fruit of his Bhakti so that they don't go back on the evil path they had followed earlier, the path that had caused them so much misery and torments. To wit, once a creature turns to the Lord he is assured of redemption from all his sins and their evil consequences. Henceforth he is deemed to be purified and holy.

We read in Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 9/32, that Lord Krishna declares: "Persons who take absolute shelter in me, though they may be born from sinful wombs of women such as harlots, or are of the trading community known as Vaishyas, or belong to the labour class known as the Shudras, or are of the lowest of the classes including the outcastes—even they can attain the supreme goal of liberation and deliverance if they have true and sincere devotion for me, the Supreme Being, for there is no bar of caste, creed, colour, sect, sex or community for having Bhakti for the Lord God."

And what kind of surrender to the Lord should it be? Well, it should be 'complete and absolute and honest' to bear any result. We read in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 131 that "Lord Ram dwells in the heart of those who have abandoned all hopes of help from one's own class, creed, race, religion, wealth, honour, family and household ties, et al, and instead takes shelter with Lord Ram alone."]

२/२/२८ सैकान्तभावो गीतार्थप्रत्यभिज्ञानात् ॥ ८३ ॥

2 / 2 / 28 saikāntabhāvō gītārthapratyabhijñānāt || 83||

(2/2/28) To have single-minded devotion and love for the Lord God, with no other thoughts to disturb or cause distraction in this single-mindedness, is the best form of Bhakti. This principle is clearly evident when one examines the words of Srimad Bhagvad Geeta of Lord Krishna. (83)

[Here the following sample verses of Lord Krishna's Geeta can be cited: (i) Canto 6, verse no. 30; (ii) Canto 6, verse no.47; (iii) Canto 9, verse no. 22; (iv) Canto 9, verse no. 34; (v) Canto 11, verse no. 55; (vi) Canto 12, verse nos. 6-7.

Now, let us read each of them so see what they say:

(i) Canto 6, verse no. 30:-

"A person who (is wise and enlightened enough to) see me (the Supreme Being symbolising the cosmic Consciousness) in all living beings, and vice versa—verily indeed he never loses sight of me (as he sees me all around himself in the form of those who see in this world), and I too don't lose sight of him (because I reside in his own self as his Atma, his wise and enlightened 'self' that is pure consciousness which sees and knows everything)."

(ii) Canto 6, verse no.47:-"An ascetic (Yogi) who worships me (the Supreme Being) with a single-minded devotion is regarded by me as the best amongst ascetics."

(iii) Canto 9, verse no. 22:-

“The devotee who thinks of no one else but is devoted to me alone and loves me alone, who worships me selflessly, and who are therefore united with me in thought and spirit—verily indeed, I bring full security to him, and I personally attend to his needs (both the temporal and the spiritual).”

(iv) Canto 9, verse no. 34:-

“Fix your mind on me, be devoted to me, worship me, make your offerings and pay your obeisance to me. In this way, link yourself with me, and depend solely upon me. Verily indeed, then you shall come to me.”

(v) Canto 11, verse no. 55:-

“Oh Arjun! He who performs all his duties for me and for my sake, who depends solely upon me, who is devoted to me alone, who has no attachment (except with me), and who is free from evil traits such as malice, ill-will, jealousy towards all living beings (because he sees me everywhere in all forms)—verily indeed, he comes to me and me alone.”

(vi) Canto 12, verse nos. 6-7:-

“Those who exclusively depend upon me, who surrender all their action to me, who worship me alone, who constantly meditate upon me and contemplate upon me alone with single-minded devotion—verily indeed, I forthwith deliver them whose mind is fixed on me from the ocean of transmigration.”

Mahabharat, Narayan Section of Shanti Parva, Canto 35, verse nos. 13151, 52, 54, say: “Those Brahmans who are duly intent on observing all the rules of religion, who read the Vedas along with the Upanishads, as well as exalted ascetics who are strict in all of their spiritual performances—verily indeed, the devotee of the Lord God who has single-minded devotion for the Lord and offers everything to him is far superior to all of them. This is not said only by the gods or wise sages but by the Lord himself (i.e. Lord Krishna) to Arjun in the battlefield of Kurushetra.”]

२ / २ / २९ परां कृत्वैव सर्वेषां तथा ह्याह ॥ ८४ ॥

2 / 2 / 29 parām kṛtvaiva sarvēṣāṁ tathā hyāha || 84||

(2/2/29) The chief aim should be to have Paraa Bhakti (the supreme form of devotion and love for Lord God). The other secondary forms of Bhakti (such as Kirtan, Bhajan, Japa, Dhyan, Yaja etc. as mentioned in verse nos. 56-58, 61, 63, 66-68 etc.) are merely tools for its realisation, and they bear fruits or give results only when one has steady and firm devotion and love for the Lord in him. This principle has been endorsed by the Lord God himself*. (84)

[*We read in Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 18/68, that Lord Krishna says: “He who has deep love and single-minded devotion for me advises other faithful followers about the secret of Bhakti, such a devotee would come to me. There is no doubt about it.”

What is this ‘secret’? The summary of this entire Chapter is this ‘secret’. And what is it? The answer is briefly this: A person who has single-minded devotion for Lord God, who loves the Lord dearly from the deepest recesses of his heart, who has completely and honestly surrendered himself and his deeds to the Lord in a selfless

manner, it is only then that he becomes eligible to attain supreme bliss and beatitude as well as liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death with its attendant sufferings. This is called having 'Paraa Bhakti'. However, in his path he can take the help of many tools called 'Gaun Bhakti', such as Kirtan, Bhajan, Yoga, Japa etc. which are tools that are secondary to the main objective of Bhakti but nevertheless play a vital role for its successful accomplishment and maturity. These Gaun Bhaktis are not the aim but means to attain Paraa Bhakti. They bear fruits only when Paraa Bhakti is there. This fact has been reiterated earlier also in verse no. 60.

So it is important for a wise and enlightened devotee to know this principle of Bhakti himself and also to enlighten others who may not be aware of it, because if he does not do it and only enjoys its rewards himself then he is being selfish.]

समाप्तश्च द्वितीयोऽध्यायः ॥ २॥

samāptaśca dvitīyō 'dhyāyaḥ || 2||

Thus ends Canto 2 of Shandilya Bhakti Sutra

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Canto 3/ Part 1

॥ शाण्डिल्य भक्ति सूत्रम् ॥

तृतीयोऽध्यायः

प्रथममाह्निकम्

|| śāṇḍilya bhakti sūtram ||

tr̥tīyō 'dhyāyaḥ

prathamamāhnikam

३ / १ / १ भजनीयेनाद्वितीयमिदं कृत्स्नस्य तत्स्वरूपत्वात् ॥ ८५॥

3 / 1 / 1 bhajanīyēnādvitīyamidaṁ kṛtsnasya tatsvarūpatvāt || 85||

(3/1/1) The Lord God who is to be worshipped, honoured, invoked, loved and meditated upon, i.e. the Lord for whom one should have Bhakti (devotion) is none else but the Supreme Being. He is the only one who is worthy of having Bhakti for.

Verily indeed, this whole creation, from its minutest element to the most colossal entity, is a manifestation of the same Supreme Being who has revealed himself in each of the units of this universe. There is nothing in existence that is not an image of the Supreme Being, which does not reflect the presence of the Supreme Being. To wit, each unit of this creation is an inseparable part of the whole that is known as the Supreme Being ('Brahm' in the words of the Upanishads), and there is no other truth except this—because everything in this creation is a manifestation of the Lord in one way or the other.

To be enlightened about this fact and worshipping the Lord God with this clear understanding is the supreme form of Bhakti (known as the Paraa Bhakti), and it is this kind of Bhakti that leads to attainment of final beatitude and felicity for the devotee; it is this Bhakti that provides the spiritual aspirant liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration, and it ensures salvation and emancipation of his soul. (85)

[In this context, refer also to verse no. 87 herein below.

The unequivocal and irrefutable metaphysical truth of creation as affirmed in this present verse no. 85 is also the chief philosophical doctrine expounded by all the Upanishads where the Supreme Being is referred to as Brahm. The Upanishads assert that Brahm is the cause and end of this creation; Brahm pervades this creation uniformly; Brahm is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing; there is nothing that is not Brahm, and there is nothing beyond Brahm.

And what or who is 'Brahm'? Upanishads say that Brahm is the personified form of the cosmic Consciousness that is the root cause of everything in existence. Brahm does everything via the medium of its cosmic dynamic energy known as Shakti. Maya, or delusions, is one of the many ways this Shakti is revealed. Prakriti, or Nature, is another aspect of Brahm, i.e. Prakriti is a revelation of Brahm at the cosmic level. The Jiva, the living being, is a manifestation of Brahm at the micro level of creation. Lord Vishnu, also known as the Viraat Pursuh, is a manifestation of Brahm at the macro level of creation, so are the many gods and goddesses and other celestial bodies. To wit, the entire animate and inanimate world is a manifestation or revelation of Brahm. Hence, whatever exists in this world or the universe is Brahm in that form, individually and collectively.

The term Brahm (pronounced often times also as Brahmn) has wide connotations—it means any one or all of the following: The Supreme One, the Supreme Being, the Viraat Purush (the cosmic form of the Supreme Being), the Parmatma (the supreme Atma or Soul; the ethereal Spirit), the cosmic Consciousness, the Absolute Truth, the Universal Truth, the Divine Being, the subtle and sublime entity that is all-pervading, all-encompassing, immanent, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient and all-knowing, that which is both invisible as well as visible, that which has an existence both at the macrocosmic level of creation as well as the microcosmic level, that which predates creation and lasts beyond creation, that from which the entire known as well as the unknown world has emerged, that which is impossible to prove but incontrovertibly there, that which even the scriptures have failed to define and describe in certain terms, and so on and so forth.

The Atharva Veda's Mahavakya Upanishad, verse no. 10 says that Brahm is the Supreme Being. To quote—"It is the divine, eclectic Brahm whose glories and

majesties are being eulogized by ancient Gods and saints; it is Brahm who is held in high esteem by them. It is this Brahm who is pursued and worshipped by them. It is this Brahm who is the ultimate 'Deva' or the exalted Lord God known as the Supreme Being."

In fact, Brahm is the object of all Upanishadic discussions, all metaphysical and theological debates and ponderings. It is the object of all meditation and worship and knowledge. It is the final frontier of knowledge that is achievable with honest endeavour, and it is called the ultimate Truth and the absolute Reality in all that exist. Without Brahm, nothing is true and real.

Brahm in metaphysical context refers to the *pure Consciousness* that has two levels of existence—one is the macro level, and the other is the micro level. At the macro level this refers to the cosmic Consciousness that is universal and uniform throughout this creation, and this fact that the cosmic Consciousness is the Supreme Being himself personified is endorsed in the Atharva Veda's *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 56. At the micro level of creation, the term 'consciousness' refers to the individual's Atma, i.e. the soul of the individual creature. This Atma is his truthful 'self'.

Since everything in creation is a revelation of Brahm, it naturally follows that the term 'Brahm' also applies to the inanimate things of this world as much as it applies to the animate creatures. At a more subtle and more microscopic level of physical existence, the term 'consciousness' implies the dynamic forces and energy of creation that subtly live inside the atom of all elements, and thereby of all things that exist in this physical world because the atom is the basic unit in this creation and all elements are basically made up of atoms. The atom is the fundamental unit that represents the unique identity of any given element. In the field of metaphysics, the basic elements are earth, water, fire, air and sky, and the dynamic force that are inherent in all of them which enables them to harbour and sustain life is known as the 'Brahm' factor—for otherwise they would have not been able to harbour and sustain 'life'.

Therefore we see that whereas the term Brahm refers to the 'consciousness' that is present in all 'living beings' such as plants and animals, it also applies to the apparently 'non living' aspect of creation because all things that exist are made of the basic elements, and all elements have 'atom' as their basic unit. The atom has dynamism and stupendous cosmic energy trapped in its core—as is evident in modern times when we are all well acquainted with the phenomenon of 'atomic energy'.

The Annapurna Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, verse nos. 17-18 describes the uniqueness of Brahm as follows—

"Verse no. 17 = Whatever is visible in this world consisting of two facets, one that is animate and the other that is inanimate, has something at its core without which this world would just not exist.

The transcendental vision which enables a man to see this hidden entity without which nothing would exist, the entity that is not visible and apparent in its external form but nevertheless constitutes the very core and the very basis of creation, helps him to realise the universal presence of the invisible Brahm that forms the core, known as the 'Atma', of the entire creation.

This eclectic vision of creation enables the wise and enlightened aspirant to see Brahm everywhere in creation, to realise that Brahm is the essence of existence, and that it is the truth that is universal, uniform, all-inclusive and all-pervading (17)."

"Verse no. 18 = A person who has any kind of attraction for or attachment with any of the things that are visible in this world is said to be one who is bonded to

this world, who is fettered and bound in shackles. [This is because all things that are visible in this mortal world are gross in nature, are perishable and transient by nature.]

To be freed from such attractions or attachments is deemed to be Mukti or freedom.

It is impossible to describe one's feelings in tangible and comprehensive form about what one has 'seen' behind the external façade of the visible world.

[The reference here is to 'Brahm' and not to the physical sights of the world. In other words, the 'Brahm' that the wise, enlightened and Brahm-realised man 'sees', or of whom he has a divine vision, or whom he perceives as the basis and fundamental essence of creation, cannot be described in words. This is because words have their own limitations, and Brahm is such a divine, esoteric, enigmatic and mysterious entity that it can only be experienced and never defined in words. Brahm is not something gross that can be 'seen' with the gross organ of sight (eye) and therefore it cannot be described, because a man can only correctly describe things that he has 'actually seen with his eyes'. The Brahm that he 'sees' is with the 'eyes of self-realisation, erudition, wisdom and enlightenment'; this Brahm exists in the subtle plane of existence and not in the physical plane like other sense objects. Just like the physical eyes cannot see the 'air' or the 'atom' to be able to define or describe them, it is also not able to do so with Brahm.

Even in the physical world when one sees any object, he would not be able to completely describe it in its entirety because of the fact that words have their limited use, but supposing he is able to narrate any thing seen in physical form completely, the narration might not hold good after some time because the thing would have undergone a change, howsoever miniscule.]

In fact, this sight or vision (of Brahm) can only be witnessed and experienced and endorsed, but never defined or described (18)."

Thus, a wise man who has developed this holistic view of Brahm realises that his 'true self' is the Atma (the 'atom' in the above illustration) which is Brahm or consciousness personified (in a microcosmic level of existence), and that this same Brahm is the one who lives in each unit (atom) of creation (at the macrocosmic level of existence).

The eclectic divine virtues of Brahm have been enumerated in countless Upanishads, for instance in the following—

(a) Rig Veda's Mudgal Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-3; Canto 4, verse no. 1; Atma Prabodh Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 2-4, 6.

(b) Sam Veda's Chandogya Upanishad, Keno Upanishad and Avyakta Upanishad.

(c) Shukla Yajur Veda's following Upanishads—Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 61-64; Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad Canto 2, Brahman 3 describes this Brahm's two forms in detail.

(d) Krishna Yajur Veda's Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 15-19, Canto 3, verse nos. 17-22; Kathrudra Upanishad, verse no. 12, 27-28, 30-31, 42; Taittiriya Upanishad Valli 3, Anuvak 10, verse no. 2-5; Skanda Upanishad, verse no. 13; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 4; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 16, 20-21, 26, 29; Canto 3, verse no. 2; and Canto 4, verse nos. 31-32; Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 35; Saraswati Upanishad, verse no. 50-52; Shwetashwatar Upanishad; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 6, verse nos. 35-43, 47-57, 66-67, 103, 106 (virtues of Brahm); Kaivalya Upanishad, verse nos. 8-16, 21-23.

(e) Atharva Veda's = Mundak Upanishad, Mundak 1, section 1, verse no. 6; Mundak 2, section 2, verse no. 7, 9-11; Mundak 3, section 1, verse no. 3-5, 7-9;

Atharvashir Upanishad, Kandika 4 (full); Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 8 which is fully dedicated to enumerating the grand virtues of Brahm; Canto 9, verse nos. 3, 19-22; Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph 4, Canto 4, paragraph no. 1; Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 2, section 1, verse nos. 2-5, and Canto 3, section 1, verse nos. 1-8, 11-14; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 17-18; Canto 4, verse no. 27-31, 33, 67; Canto 4, verse nos. 35-38, 67; Canto 5, verse nos. 10, 20-21, 66-67, 72, 113; Atma Upanishad, verse nos. 1-D and 1-E, verse nos. 2-4, 9, 30-31; Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Purva Kanda/Canto 1, verse nos. 11, 13-16; Uttar Kanda/Canto 2, verse nos. 13-16, 26, 27-30, 44; Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 4; Canto 5, verse nos. 6, 8-9, 16-17, 22; Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 7; Par Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 1; Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph no. 1; Canto 2, paragraph nos. 3, 5-8 (albeit in the guise of enumerating the glorious virtues of Lord Shiva or Rudra); Mahavakya Upanishad, verse no. 6 (Brahm lives in the body as the Atma; Brahm is known as Hans), verse no. 10 (Brahm is the Supreme Being); Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 21 (Brahm is like the Akash element).]

३/१२ तच्छक्तिर्माया जडसामान्यात् ॥ ८६ ॥

3 / 1 / 2 tacchaktirmāyā jaḍasāmānyāt || 86||

(3/1/2) ‘Maya’ is the cosmic dynamic powers of the Supreme Being (also known as Brahm). The Lord employs this power known as Maya (which is the Lord’s cosmic power that creates a veil of delusions) to create things from nothing, and then the Lord keeps the cycle of creation turning endlessly by again using this Maya to keep the creature trapped in it. [Hence, Maya not only deludes but also traps.]

This Maya, inspite of having a negative and gross connotation, is as much a part of Brahm, the Supreme Being, as the rest of the creation, and especially its inanimate and grosser aspects, because everything in existence, everything in creation, is a part of Brahm (refer verse no. 85). (86)

[Obviously, if everything is a manifestation of Brahm then Maya too is a manifestation of Brahm. Maya is the dynamism or the dynamic powers of Brahm that enables the latter to create this world—refer verse nos. 37-38, 42.

A remarkable point to note here is this: This creation is the product of ‘Maya’—which means ‘a veil of delusions’. To wit, this world, with its fascinating qualities, mind-boggling variations and magnificent charms has been created in the form of a delusion, and hence it is not true! If the world is a creation of delusion, and hence not true, how can its material charms and its very existence be true? Therefore, is it not foolish to pursue this world in the hope of having permanent happiness? Is it not stupid to expect eternity in this world which itself is transient and perishable?

So therefore, a wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant would not waste his time and life after ‘this’ world which has its existence in delusions, but would instead make effort to pursue ‘that’ entity which would give him true, real and eternal happiness. And that entity is the cosmic Consciousness personified as the Supreme Being or Brahm.

The only way to overcome the trap of Maya and find freedom from it is to have Bhakti for the Lord God. This fact is explicitly stated in Ram Charit Manas,

Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 44, and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 45 where Lord Ram told the citizens of Ayodhya that: “A Jiva (living being) is trapped in the cycle of birth and death and continues to roam in it because of Maya which surrounds him on all sides and drives his deeds, circumstances, attitude, qualities and thoughts. So if you really wish to have heavenly happiness right here in this world and in this life, then you must practice the glorious virtue of Bhakti as it is a supremely liberating power that provides freedom from the evil effects of Maya.”

Further we read in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 117 that: “A Jiva (living being) is a fraction of Ishwar (the Supreme Being) who is a personified form of cosmic Consciousness, eternally pure and immaculate, and is innately a fount of bliss and beatitude. It is the same Jiva that gets tied in the snare of this cycle of transmigration and trapped in worldly miseries due to the negative impact of Maya just like an insect that is trapped by the spider’s web. [Here, the Jiva is the ‘insect’, and the Maya is the ‘spider’s web’.]”

And how would a Jiva find deliverance from this dilemma? Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 119 gives the precise answer: “A Jiva can get freedom by worshipping and having devotion for Lord Ram, for then all auspiciousness would come to the Jiva even without his asking for them.”

Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 7/14, Lord Krishna says: “This fascinating power of mine that is known as Maya, the power that creates a veil of delusions, is astounding and most powerful. It consists of the three Gunas (the three qualities that combine to give shape to Nature; the mode in which creation exists) that are also at the root of this creation. This veil of Maya is extremely strong and powerful, and hence very difficult to break through. However, those who worship me resolutely are able to pierce through it very easily and cross its hurdles (to see the truth and find liberation and deliverance from the trap cast by Maya).”]

३ /१ /३ व्यापकत्वाद्वयाप्यानाम् ॥ ८७॥

3 /1 /3 vyāpakatvādvayāpyānām || 87||

(3/1/3) The elementary Truth of creation is that the Supreme Being, who is also known as Brahm, is immanent and all-pervading. He is immortal and immutable. He is omnipresent everywhere in this creation, both in its animate form as well as in its inanimate form. From this elementary Truth other things emerge. Hence, everything is a form of Brahm, and there is nothing other than this. (87)

[Refer to verse no. 85 herein above in this context. These verses resonate with the metaphysical and theological doctrine of the Upanishads as regards Brahm and the truth of existence. These verses clearly hint that a sagacious and erudite devotee must keep in mind that he must worship the Supreme Being alone if he wishes to derive real good from his spiritual efforts.]

३ /१ /४ न प्राणिबुद्धिभ्योऽसम्भवात् ॥ ८८॥

3 /1 /4 na prāṇibuddhibhyō'sambhavāt || 88||

(3/1/4) This huge and wondrous creation with its astounding diversity and multifarious forms that are most magnificent and exceedingly fascinating is not (na) a creation of an ordinary ‘living being’ (prāṇi) who may have used his intelligence (buddhi) to craft it. Verily indeed, it is not possible (‘sambhavāt) for an ordinary ‘living being’ to use his mind and its creative abilities to create this universe that defies all explanations and is beyond imagination.

[Hence, it must be some ‘superior being’ who has done it. And who is that ‘being’? He is the one who is known as the ‘Supreme Being’, the Lord God to whom the devotee offers his prayers.] (88)

[We have read that the Supreme Being is a personified form of cosmic Consciousness, and therefore he is the Supreme Atma or the Parmatma of this creation, or the supreme Self of this living creation. This picture is at the macro level of creation. At the micro level of creation we find that this same cosmic Consciousness resides in all the Jivas, the individual living beings, in this creation as their individual Atma or their true ‘self’. Hence theoretically there is no difference between the Parmatma and the Jiva, or the Supreme Being and the ordinary living being.

We have also read that this cosmic Consciousness is the cause or the root of this creation; the creation has been created by this cosmic Consciousness—because only an entity that is living and conscious can do something, and not an entity that is inert and non-living. So it may be argued this wonderful creation may be a product of a ‘Jiva’ or an ordinary living being.

This verse addresses this question and settles all confusions in this regard. It says that though it is true that the consciousness is the same in the individual living being as well as the Supreme Being, yet there is a fundamental difference between the two. It is like the ‘case of a father and his off spring—though both have the same gene yet the off spring has come from the father, and it is not the other way round. The individual living being is an image or a fraction of the cosmic ‘whole’ known as the Supreme Being, and it is not vice versa. The abilities of the living being has many limitations—such as that his physical body cannot be immortal, he cannot be present at more than one place at the same time, he is not immanent and all-pervading, he is not omniscient as he cannot know everything because of the vastness of knowledge that goes beyond his reach, and so on and so forth. These limitations do not apply to the Supreme Being as he has no physical body that may act as a barrier to the abilities of the cosmic Consciousness that the Supreme Being personifies. Hence, the inherent limitations that are put on the abilities of the Consciousness in the case of the ordinary living being do not apply to the Supreme Being at all.

Besides this point, when we examine this creation we find that is exceptionally complex and highly complicated in nature. It has a lot of ironies and paradoxes that confounds and boggles the mind. For instance, it has entities that are extremely small and sublime on the one hand, and most colossus and gross on the other hand. The diversity and variations in creation are baffling to the extreme, and only an Authority that is superior to others, that is supremely intelligent and resourceful, can first plan, and then execute and control this wondrous thing that is called creation. It surely requires special skills and expert craftsmanship to mould a structure like this creation is just by wishing it to be so.

To wit, this universe is not a creation of an ordinary living being, or even an ordinary god, but it is an expert craftsmanship that can be done only by an entity that has an extraordinary intelligence, imagination, skills, abilities, powers and authority to

do so. And such an entity is none but the Supreme Being himself. Therefore, it is established that there is a ‘Creator’ who has created this universe, and that this ‘Creator’ is the Supreme Being who is the Lord God and the sole Authority in creation, supervising everything in his realm, from start to finish. This astounding creation that defies all imagination and understanding is surely not the product of any ordinary living being; it is surely not created by a Jiva, the individual creature of this mortal world.]

३ / १ / ५ निर्मायोच्चावचं श्रुतीश्च निर्मिमीते पितृवत् ॥ ८९ ॥

3 / 1 / 5 nirmāyōccāvacam śrutīśca nirmimīte pitryat || 89||

(3/1/5) Having created the entire universe from its lowest to its highest form, or from its grossest to its subtlest form, the supreme Creator then created living beings from the most minutest of size to the ones of mammoth proportions who would populate this universe.

The Creator then deemed it necessary to create a body of knowledge in the form of the Vedas and other scriptures (śrutīśca) that would serve as guides to help the living beings, his ‘off-springs’, to know what is good for them and what is not in the same way that a worldly father teaches his sons and arranges for their best of education so that they can stand on their own feet, become prepared to face the harsh realities of the world with ease, and achieve great success and merit in life that would not only give glory to the concerned member of the family but to the whole family as well. (89)

[Here we note that the Supreme Being, the Parmatma, the Lord God, is also called the ‘Father of creation’. Like any loving ‘father’ who goes out of his way to ensure that his sons live a comfortable and happy life when they grow up, worrying about their future right from the day they are born, the supreme ‘Father’ also makes sure that his own extended family, i.e. the vast creation which he has produced himself, lives happily and comfortably, is provided with all its needs, and its members not only attain glory for themselves but also for their family and their Father by living a life of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety and merit.

For this purpose the supreme Father, the Creator of this creation, produced a body of knowledge known as the Vedas (the scriptures). These scriptures help the living being to become enlightened about how to lead a life of merit, about the true purpose of life, about what is true and what is false in this world, about what is good and what is bad, and countless other things that are needed to be known. So a study of these scriptures prepares a living being to lead a life of merit and attain glory. On the other hand, neglecting the principles laid down in the scriptures would fill a person’s life with misdeeds and evil that would ultimately lead to his downfall. It is like the case of a son who is admitted to a good school by his father in the hope that his son would acquire good education and shine in life. But it is actually upto the son to use this golden opportunity for his upliftment or waste it away by being in bad company at school and acquiring bad habits. What can the father do; how is he to be blamed for the ruined life of his son? The father surely wanted that his son becomes well educated and succeeds in life by teaching him good manners and his own vocation at home, and admitting him to the best school or college that he could locate. But if the son still gets spoilt by keeping bad company or not paying heed to his studies then he

alone is to be blamed for ruining his own life. The father is filled with regrets, but since he loves his son most dearly he refrains from inflicting severe punishment on him. At some point of time the frustrated father would turn his attention away from his son who has become evil and spoilt, and would become focused on the other son who has lived upto his father's expectations, showering his love on the latter son. But in case the evil and spoilt son realises his mistake and decides to make amends and repent, the father would welcome him and bless him in his effort.

In a similar way, the supreme Father created everything of necessity in this world and made the living being heir to it; he created the Vedas so that his off-spring, the Jiva or the living being, is well taught about what is good for him. But some unfortunate Jiva spoils his own life by neglecting the teaching of the scriptures, while others follow the principles as taught by these scriptures and attain glory in life. At some point of time if the fallen and sinful Jiva regrets and decides to make amends by following the scriptures, the supreme Father welcomes him with open arms.

Another point to note is that a worldly father treats all his sons equally, and all have equal right over his assets, but still the son who loves his father more, who shows respect to him and is obedient to him, is dearer to the father than his other siblings. The father is more concerned about the welfare of son who loves him and is obedient to him as compared to the other sons who are disrespectful and wayward.

In a similar way, the supreme Father, the Lord God, has a soft corner in his heart for his true devotees who are totally dedicated to serving him selflessly, who are sincerely devoted to him, and who love him more than anybody or anything else in this world—i.e. the devotee who has 'Bhakti' is very dear to the Lord God. Then, like a worldly father who would go out of his way to help the son who loves him and is ever-ready to serve the father, the supreme Father, the Lord God, too goes out of his way to take care of his devotee who has Bhakti for him.]

३ / १ / ६ मिश्रोपदेशान्नेति चेन्न स्वल्पत्वात् ॥ ९० ॥

3 / 1 / 6 miśrōpadēśānnēti cēna svalpatvāt || 90||

(3/1/6) Sometimes it is argued that the Vedas are often too difficult to comprehend and their knowledge is very esoteric and complicated, so they cannot be said to be created by the Creator with the intention of giving knowledge to the common and ordinary Jiva (living being) because he would find it extremely difficult to decipher their contents. But it is not true because the Vedas are vast repositories of knowledge to suit all categories of the Jivas and to cater to all the levels of intelligence and wisdom they have.

To wit, though it is true that some of the knowledge contained in the Vedas are indeed too complex and esoteric, but such instances are limited and are intended for those Jivas who have high mental abilities. But the majority of the teaching of the Vedas is easy to understand and follow in practical life. Of course some basic level of intelligence and wisdom are necessary in this case too as it is with acquisition of any knowledge even in the secular world. (90)

[Usually it is believed that the Vedas, especially the part that contains knowledge of metaphysics and theology, are highly complex and incomprehensible. And the other part that deals with rituals is useless as it has no direct bearing for the enlightenment of a creature and his spiritual welfare. But this is also true in our secular world: all

fields of learning, such as science, arts, commerce, philosophy, medicine, engineering, law, management, electronic technology etc., have varying levels of complexities in the school and college curriculum. All students are not of equal intelligence, and their aptitudes too vary from individual to individual. For instance, some students find mathematics beyond their abilities, while some simply enjoy this subject.

Again, all the basic subjects such as physics, chemistry, biological sciences (zoology, botany), mathematics, history, geography and languages are taught to all the students in school, whether they like it or not, and whether or not they are of any use to a student later in life. It is also the same case with the Vedas—all the knowledge contained in the Vedas is not equally useful to all, and a wise person would choose from the vast repository of knowledge that is made available to him only that part which suits him and fulfils his purpose of study.]

३ / १ / ७ फलमस्माद्बादरायणो दृष्टत्वात् ॥ ९१ ॥

3 / 1 / 7 phalamasmādbādarāyaṇō dr̥ṣṭatvāt || 91||

(3/1/7) It is the Lord God who grants rewards or punishments for the deeds done by a creature. A similar thing is observed in this secular world too. (91)

[If the subject of a king does some good deed or service for the king, he is duly rewarded by the king. On the other hand if the person commits some crime or evil deed, the king would punish him. To wit, granting rewards or giving punishment is the prerogative of the king.

Similarly, it is the Lord God who gives reward and punishment to the Jiva according to the deed done by him.]

३ / १ / ८ व्युत्क्रमादप्ययस्तथा दृष्टम् ॥ ९२ ॥

3 / 1 / 8 vyutkramādapyayastathā dr̥ṣṭam || 92||

(3/1/8) At the time of conclusion (of the cycle of creation, or the death of an individual creature), the elements that constitute this universe follow the reverse order in which they were created to finally merge with their primary source. This is also seen in this secular world. (92)

[The elements were created in a sequential order, from the subtlest to the grossest. The five fundamental elements of creation are sky, air, fire, water and earth. Out of them, the sky is the subtlest and the earth is the grossest, with the other elements in this series gradually increasing in grossness from air to fire to water. The sequence that was followed for the creation of these elements at the time of revelation of this universe is—sky, air, fire, water and earth in this order. All these five elements act as the basic building blocks for this creation. The creation is the sum total of these elements combining and interacting with each other in different ratios, permutations and combinations.

When the time of conclusion arrives, the elements are released and follow the reverse sequence of their formation: the earth dissolves into the water, the water into the fire, the fire into the air, the air into the sky. And finally the sky turns into the cosmic ether to form the cosmic void. When the new cycle of creation begins, this sequence of disintegration is reversed once again.

This sequence is easy to visualise. The 'earth' would disintegrate and sink into the ocean which consists of 'water'. To wit, the earth element is absorbed in the water element. This water would be evaporated by the heat of the sun, which means that the 'fire' would make the water vanish. To wit, the water element is absorbed by the fire element. The 'air' present in the atmosphere would blow out the fire with its strong gust, as is witnessed in storms where no fire can be kept alight. To wit, the fire element is absorbed by the air element. The 'sky' is fathomless and endless. We may experience a gust of wind on earth, but in outer space there is complete stillness. To wit, the air element is absorbed by the sky element. And then what happens to the 'sky' element. The sky element that constitutes this mortal world is absorbed in the endless void of the outer space filled with ether. This last frontier is eternal because it absorbs everything else and remains in existence till the time comes for the new cycle of creation to start. At that time, the elements that had collapsed earlier into the cosmic ether start to spread out in a sequence that is reverse of the one in which they had collapsed. To wit, first the sky comes into being, then comes the air that fills this sky, then this air blows softly to ignite the dormant cosmic fire, which in its turn provides warmth that helps life to spring up from its hibernating mode. The water element emerges to cool down the heat of the fire. Finally comes into existence the earth that would form a base for all the above elements.

How the grosser aspect of the earth disintegrates into its subtle aspect known as the 'earth element' will be clear by a simple example. An earthen pot represents the gross aspect of the earth as it is moulded from earth. When this pot breaks and its pieces crushed, its original shape vanishes and becomes indistinguishable from the earth and its soil on which it falls to become one with it. In this example we see that the grosser aspect of earth symbolised by the pot has disintegrated into the subtle form of the earth element when it falls on the ground and mixes with the soil to become indistinguishable from it.

A similar thing can be witnessed in the case of the water element. When we have water in a glass, this water has a form and observable attributes, and so it is the grosser form of the water element. But when this water is heated it evaporates and becomes invisible. Where has it gone? It has been converted into vapour and moisture that assumes so fine a form that we can't see it any more. The molecules of water that were in a gross form have now converted themselves into a subtle form. So we say that the grosser form of the water element has been transformed into its subtle form.

The fire that burns is visible and has certain characteristic features. But the same fire in the form of heat and warmth is not visible. The former aspect is the gross aspect of the fire element, and the latter is its subtle aspect.

The air that blows and is felt against our faces or the air that is filled with some kind of scent as from a flower or perfume is the grosser aspect of the air element, but the air that is still or the air that we breathe is its subtle form.

The sky above the earth seems to be of different hues of colour and filled with so many celestial bodies. This is the grosser aspect of the sky element. On the other hand, the space that fills the cosmos, or the space between the different internal organs of our own bodies which we can't see but which nevertheless is there is the subtle aspect of the sky element.]

Canto 3/ Part 2

॥ शाण्डिल्य भक्ति सूत्रम् ॥

तृतीयोऽध्यायः

द्वितीयमाह्निकम्

|| śāṇḍilya bhakti sūtram ||

tr̥tīyō 'dhyāyaḥ

dvitīyamāhnikam

३ / २ / १ तदैक्यं नानात्वैकत्वमुपाधियोगहानादादित्यवत् ॥ ९३ ॥

3 / 2 / 1 tadaikyam nānātvaiikatvamupādhiyōgahānādādityavat || 93||

(3/2/1) ‘That’, i.e. the ‘Supreme Being’ (who is also known as Brahm, and who represents the cosmic Consciousness), is One and without a second (tadaikyam). He is immutable, constant, eternal and without a parallel.

Inspite of this Truth that is absolutely irrefutable and unequivocal, the Supreme Being, or the Brahm, appears to be have countless forms and multifarious attributes because he has voluntarily assumed all these forms in order to reveal himself in the form of this creation (nānātvaiikatvamupādhiyōgahāna). To wit, the apparent multiplicity in his otherwise One and immutable form is due to the fact that the entire creation, with its astounding array of variations and different forms of entities that baffle the mind, are all manifestations of the same divine entity.

It is like the case of one single ‘sun’ (āditya) appearing to be many in number if one sees its reflection in the water filled in a number of pots and pans. If these reflecting multiple reflecting surfaces are removed then one would realise that the truth about the ‘sun’ is that it is one and only one. (93)

[This verse basically teaches to see unity in diversity. Just like the different images of the sun seen in the water does not mean that there are more than one sun, the multifarious gross forms and astounding variations in virtues and attributes in which the cosmic Consciousness has revealed itself in this creation does not mean that its primary form is not pristine pure and has any kind of taint.

The Chandogya Upanishad, 3/14/1, says that: “All this is indeed Brahm, and nothing but Brahm.”

The Katha Upanishad, 4/11 says: “There is no multiplicity here.”

Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 13/33, says: “Even as a single sun illuminates the entire world, the Atma that is pure consciousness, immutable and one too illuminates (gives meaning, life and consciousness to) this world.”

Vishnu Puran, 2/16/22-23, says: “Even as the one unchangeable sky appears to have different hues of colour such as grey or blue (due to dust, smoke, cloud, moisture and other impurities), so does the same pure and universal Consciousness known as the Atma appear to have different forms with multiple variations to a person who is deluded and ignorant. Whatever spiritual Truth there is in the world is known as the Atma, and there is nothing other than it.”

It has been said earlier in verse nos. 85 and 87 of Shandilya Bhakti Sutra that the entire creation has come into existence from one single entity known as Brahm. It is Brahm that is revealed or manifested in the form of the entire creation. Put simply it means that all the units in this creation, the animate as well as the inanimate, the gross as well as the subtle, the minutest form as well as the most colossal one, are one or the other forms of Brahm itself. Verily indeed, there is nothing but Brahm; there is nothing in this creation that is not Brahm.

Brahm, i.e. the Supreme Being, is the personified form of cosmic Consciousness which is eternal, universal, without attributes, invisible, sublime and subtle. When this Consciousness reveals itself in the form of this creation it assumes certain characteristics that are unique to this creation, and also distinguish it from Brahm. Some of the characteristics of this creation that distinguish it from Brahm are the following: the creation is mortal, limited, with attributes, visible and gross, whereas Brahm is just the opposite of these.

The creation is of any value because its primary form known as Brahm represents the Absolute Truth. Obviously, without Brahm this entire creation would be meaningless and false.

And what or who is ‘Brahm’? Brahm is the cosmic Consciousness that is at the root of this creation; it is the cosmic Consciousness that has created this living world. This is so obvious that it does not need any explanation—because only an entity that has intelligence, energy, dynamism and life would be able to do anything creative and constructive, for dead, inane and lifeless entities don’t do anything at all, they can’t create or do any constructive work.

There are two basic levels at which this cosmic Consciousness is understood. One is at the macrocosmic level, and the other is at the microcosmic level. At the macrocosmic level we recognise the universal Consciousness as ‘Brahm’ or the Supreme Being, while at the microcosmic level it is called a Jiva, the living being. This Brahm when it is viewed or understood or perceived at the sublime and subtle level of creation exhibits the characteristics of pure Consciousness—i.e. it is eternal, immutable, formless, without attributes, all-pervading, all-knowing etc. But when this same Brahm reveals itself in a grosser form that characterises this world, it also has to assume certain characters that are unique to this world—i.e. it is gross, mortal, subject to divisions, is perishable, with a form and attributes, is limited in scope, scale and reach, and so on and so forth.

So therefore, when Brahm (the cosmic Consciousness) reveals itself in the form of the Jiva (the living being) in this world, it appears to have lost its pristine form by assuming so many characteristics and attributes that are gross in nature and quite at variance from the sublime and subtle qualities and virtues of Brahm.

This situation leads to the mistaken belief that the Supreme Being has multiple forms known as Jivas, the living beings, in this world, and that they are separate entities, just like the many images of the single sun creates an illusion that there is

more than one sun, and that each reflection of the sun has an independent truthful existence. If the water is stirred a bit then the image of the sun gets blurred or it may even vanish from sight, but does that mean there is no sun, or that the sun is affected in any way whatsoever?

So briefly, a wise and enlightened devotee sees his Lord God everywhere around him, in all individuals and things. So he never feels that the Lord is far away, for he knows that the nearest object to him represents his beloved Lord. This universal view of the Supreme Being marks the pinnacle of Bhakti; it is a signal that the devotee has reached that state of enlightenment where he has risen above the gross and the mundane to have a transcendental view the world, where he sees the entire world as a manifestation of his Lord God, and nothing else.

At this enlightened mental stage the devotee does not need to go to any 'heaven' where the Lord lives, because this so-called heaven is right here where he lives at present. This exalted state of mind marks the mature stage of Bhakti.]

३ /२ /२ पृथगिति चेन्न परेणासम्बन्धात् प्रकाशानाम् ॥ ९४ ॥

3 / 2 / 2 prthagiti cēna parēṇāsambandhāt prakāśānām || 94||

(3/2/2) If it is said that since the mortal creature (the Jiva, the living being) has many attributes that are opposite to those of Brahm, the Supreme Being, so therefore the creature must be different from Brahm—then this argument is fallacious and misleading.

The reason is that this difference appears only at the superficial level, but if one looks a bit deeper he would discover the reality and the truth that the 'Consciousness' that lights the inner-self of the creature (i.e. which injects life into the gross body of the creature in the form of his Atma or soul) is the same Consciousness that lights up the entire creation in the form of the Parmatma or the supreme Atma known as Brahm. (94)

["Consciousness" represents life; without consciousness there is no life. All living beings have this Consciousness within their gross bodies. If they didn't have it they would be lifeless and dead. The individual living being represents this 'Consciousness' at the micro-level of creation. When we examine this creation from a broader and wider perspective, i.e. have a macro-level of understanding, we discover that it is the same Consciousness that pervades throughout this creation. At this level it is called the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma.

This Supreme Atma (known by different names such as Brahm, the Supreme Being, Parmatma etc.) is eternal, immutable and immanent because it represents the subtle and sublime form of pure Consciousness. On the other hand when this Consciousness reveals itself in a gross body of a creature it is called a Jiva, the living being.

Since the Jiva has a gross body, the Consciousness too appears to be gross. On the other hand, since Brahm is divine in nature, the Consciousness in this form too appears to be divine, sublime and subtle. But essentially they are the same.

An illustration would clear this concept. The same sun appears to have different levels of brilliance, different shapes, sizes and colour under different situations and times of the day. It may even lose its splendour altogether and get progressively reduced in size and shape during the solar eclipse. During a cloudy sky

the sun may completely vanish from sight, or appear fleetingly and blurred. But does that mean that the primary form of the sun ever changes or is affected by the gross changes in its environment? The obvious answer is ‘no’.

Another way to look at this example of the sun is this: The sun illuminates the world equally, but if there is a cloud or thick smoke in the sky then that part of the earth does not get sunlight. Does it mean that the sun is not shining or has become blurred, or that it has become partial or biased against certain parts of the world and has refused to give it light? Once again the answer is ‘no’.

Similarly, the pristine pure Atma which is nothing but Consciousness remains unchanged and unaffected by the grossness of the world, both at the micro level of creation as well as at its macro level. But it appears to show diversity and variations due to many factors that are associated with this gross creation. If one becomes wise and enlightened then he would rise above the grossness of this mundane world to see and understand the truth and the reality of the Atma.]

३ /२ /३ न विकारिणस्तु करणविकारात् ॥ ९५॥

3 / 2 / 3 na vikāriṇastu karaṇavikārāt || 95||

(3/2/3) That Brahm, the Supreme Being, has no shortcomings, negativities and taints that are usually associated with this creation (na vikāriṇastu), though it is a fact that the creation is a manifestation of Brahm, and therefore whatever exists in this creation, including its negativities and taints, are deemed to have originated in Brahm as he is the cause of everything (karaṇavikārāt), making it look as if Brahm too is tainted and has negativities in him like his revelation known as creation.

This is a wrong and an erroneous surmise about the eclectic virtues of Brahm, and is contradictory to the actual facts. The fact is that Brahm is taintless and without any negativities of any kind. The reason is that Brahm represents pure Consciousness in its most divine, holy, sublime and subtle form. When this primarily pristine pure entity revealed itself in the form of this visible creation it automatically became grosser, because the product, the creation, is gross. To wit, Consciousness (or Brahm) appears to have lost its pristine purity, and instead become tainted by negativities that are so typical and so closely associated with this gross world. But grossness of the product, i.e. this creation, does not mean that the primary source of it, i.e. the Brahm, is gross too. (95)

[The reason why this creation, or this known world, with its taints, negativities and shortcomings does not reflect the true nature of its creator Brahm, the Supreme Being or the cosmic Consciousness, is that the creation is a product of the ‘Maya Shakti’ of Brahm. This Maya Shakti refers to the powers of Brahm to create delusions at a cosmic and universal level. Refer: verse nos. 86-88 herein above.

So therefore it follows that the creation, which is the product of the Maya Shakti, would definitely have virtues of its originator, which here is Maya Shakti, and it because of this fact too that the creation has grossness and many negative qualities that Brahm lacks though it is Brahm who is deemed to be the Supreme Authority who created everything.

To wit, even though Brahm is the Supreme Authority who is behind everything in existence, but the actual power that created this tainted and corrupted world is the Maya Shakti of Brahm, and not Brahm himself. It’s like the case of an

Emperor being held responsible and accused for any misdeeds done by his powerful ministers, knights or kings who have been empowered by the Emperor to govern his vast and extended empire. A person of low wisdom would accuse the Emperor for the many mischief created by others who act on his behalf, but an intelligent man of wisdom would realise the truth and would not blame the Sovereign for any evil for this man knows that the Emperor is an extremely holy person who can never be accused of any wrongdoings.

Likewise, wise and enlightened men never accuse Brahm of having taints, shortcomings and corruptions that dominate this world even though this creation has been created by Brahm because they know that it is the Maya Shakti that has spoilt everything.

So now, what is the solution? How would the Jiva, the living being who lives in this world and is invariably subjected to the negative impacts of the Maya Shakti that has produced so many spiritual problems for him, find freedom from its shackles and get rid of the torments caused by negativities, and get peace and happiness instead? The answer is to this grave spiritual problem of existence lies in the theme of this Book: it is 'Bhakti'. This is explicitly mentioned in the next verse no. 96 herein below.

To wit, if a person of wisdom develops devotion and love for the Lord God, if he turns away from this world which torments him and tries to drag him deeper into the whirlpool of miseries and troubles, and instead turn towards the Lord who is the great liberator and redeemer of all—then surely the person would overcome the negativities and taints associated with Maya and find deliverance from this world and its torments.

The intent of this verse is to convince the devotee that the Lord God he worships is pristine pure, holy and divine, and he should not be misled or go astray from his spiritual path by any confusions and doubts in this regard.]

३ / २ / ४ अनन्यभक्त्या तदूबुद्धिर्बुद्धिलयादत्यन्तम् ॥ ९६ ॥

3 / 2 / 4 ananyabhaktyā tadūbuddhirbuddhilayādatyantam || 96||

(3/2/4) [This verse answers the great spiritual dilemma: how would one find freedom from the confusions and delusions that dominate this world, and attain peace, bliss and beatitude of an abiding nature?]

When one develops Paraa Bhakti for the Lord God (i.e. when one develops deep, true and unwavering devotion, love and affection for the Lord, when one completely surrenders himself to the Lord and worships him with faith and sincerity), one is able to overcome the distraction and confusion caused by the mind and its inherent tendency to doubt and be sceptic about everything.

It is only then that the spiritual aspirant finds eternal peace, bliss, felicity and beatitude for himself. It is only then that he finds freedom from all miseries and torments that cause so much consternation and perplexity for him. It is only then that he attains liberation and deliverance for himself, and emancipation and salvation for his soul. (96)

[The very first Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition is known as the 'Katha Upanishad'. In its Canto 2, Part 2, verse no. 13 we read: "He (the Supreme Being;

Brahm) who is the chief amongst all wise and enlightened beings, who is the chief eternal being amongst all those who are deemed to be eternal, he who has revealed himself in the form of all living beings although he is One and without a second, he who gives all the living beings the reward according to their individual deeds though he himself is neutral and does not get involved in anything—verily indeed, eternal peace, bliss and beatitude are found by nobody else but only those persons who are self-realised, wise and enlightened enough to worship and visualise that Supreme Atma, the ‘Parmatma’, that represents cosmic Consciousness, right within their own self as their own Atma, which is also pure consciousness and an image of the Parmatma.”

The importance of Bhakti has been emphasised in Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 8/22 by Lord Krishna when he says: “That eternal unmanifest ‘Purush’, another name for the cosmic form of the Supreme Being, is the one in whom all living beings reside, and it is he who resides in all living beings (in the form of their Atma or pure conscious soul). He is attainable solely by Bhakti (devotion, love and affection for the Lord God).

Thus, a wise person should rise above the mundane and become ‘self’ realised. He must understand that of all the objects of veneration in this life, it is this ‘Self’, both at the microcosmic level of the individual creature as well as at the universal and the macrocosmic level of the entire creation, that is the most venerable. In all sooth and without gainsay, only a person who has understood this universal and irrefutable spiritual Truth and revels in the ‘Self’ would find eternal happiness and true joy in life, and nobody else.

And what is this ‘Self’? It is the pure conscious Atma which is the true ‘self’ of all living beings at the micro level of this creation, and the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma that is known as the Supreme Being, at the macro level of this creation.

This Atma is a universal, eternal and pristine pure conscious entity. The rest of this creation is gross and perishable. So therefore, if a person pursues an entity that is itself perishable, i.e. if he pursues this gross world, he cannot expect to find eternity and peace as a reward; such a person is deluded inasmuch as he seeks eternity and bliss from an entity that is inherently mortal and a fount of miseries.

On the other hand, if a person is wise he would worship the Atma which is eternal and blissful, and therefore the reward that comes to him is in likeness of his object of worship—i.e. he gets eternal bliss and happiness.]

३ / २ / ५ आयुश्चिरमितरेषां तु हानिरनास्पदत्वात् ॥ ९७ ॥

3 / 2 / 5 āyus̥cīramitarēṣāṃ tu hāniranāspadatvāt || 97||

(3/2/5) A self-realised and enlightened person who has attained Paraa Bhakti, i.e. who has developed the supreme form of devotion and love to the Lord God, is destined to liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death in this mortal mundane world; he is destined to attain emancipation and salvation of his soul; he is destined to attain oneness with the Supreme Being as he is able to merge his Atma with the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma.

But he has to live in this world in a dispassionate and detached manner till the time all his past deeds and their consequences are dissipated. Since he has managed to control his mind (as stated in verse no. 96 herein above), no fresh deeds are deemed to be done by him that would create any new chain of consequences for him. So as a

result, when he leaves his gross body at the time of his death, he finds final liberation for himself; he attains final deliverance from the cycle of transmigration. (97)

[This verse says that if a wise person develops the supreme form of Bhakti for the Lord God, he will be able to have peace and joy in this world itself. This wise devotee would not be subjected to the suffering from the countless torments, pains and miseries associated with life in this world from which his other friends and peers who do not have Bhakti suffer. So he leads a pleasurable life of joy and happiness spread all around him. This happens also because this wise devotee sees his Lord in every unit of creation as advised in verse nos. 85-93. He feels the same closeness with his beloved Lord God as he would find when his soul leaves the confines of the gross body to merge with the infinite Atma, the cosmic Consciousness.

Forsooth and without gainsay, this is, after all, the main objective of Bhakti.]

३ / २ / ६ संसृतिरेषामभक्तिः स्यान्नाज्ञानात् कारणासिद्धेः ॥ ९८ ॥

3 / 2 / 6 saṁsṛtirēṣāmbhaktiḥ syānnājñānāt kāraṇāsiddhēḥ || 98||

(3/2/6) A Jiva (the living being) is shakled to this world and feels miserable and tormented because he lacks the eclectic virtue of Bhakti (devotion, affection and love for Lord God) in him (saṁsṛtirēṣāmbhaktiḥ). [The Jiva is trapped in this world due to the effects of Maya or delusions. Bhakti is the only remedy for this disease; Bhakti helps the Jiva to overcome the effects of Maya. Bhakti helps the Jiva to free himself from the fetters that tie his soul to the endless cycle of birth and death in this mortal world as it provides him the opportunity to attain God-realisation that grants eternal beatitude and felicity. Hence, till the time Bhakti develops in the heart of the Jiva he would remain trapped in the cycle of transmigration with its attendant miseries and torments.]¹

It is not correct to say that the Jiva is trapped in this world due to lack of Gyan (knowledge of all shades, philosophical, spiritual or empirical; awareness) because no living being, from the single-cell organism to the most advanced creature, is completely devoid of some level of knowledge and awareness, even if it is of a primary nature, for the simple reason that all living beings are 'conscious', and 'consciousness' is a personified form of the virtue of Gyan. Hence it is beyond doubt that lack of Gyan is not the primary cause of the Jiva's entrapment in this world (syānnājñānāt kāraṇāsiddhēḥ).² (98)

[¹This verse essentially says that the chief cause of the creature getting trapped in the cycle of birth and death in this world is his lack of Bhakti (devotion for Lord God), and it is not lack of Gyan (knowledge).

This is because Maya or delusions causes the creature to think that the world, which is mortal and gross and full of miseries, is its true habitat, that real pleasure, joy and happiness is got from the material things of the world, that there is nothing beyond this life and world, that the world is true and worthy of attention, that success is measured by acquiring as much share of the material objects of this world as possible, and so on and so forth.

This fallacious and erroneous conception keeps the creature trapped endlessly in the cycle of birth and death because he would like to come back to this mortal world again and again at the end of his life.

It is said in the scriptures that Brahm, the Supreme Creator, has employed his cosmic powers of creating delusions, known as Maya Shakti, to keep the wheel of creation rolling endlessly till the time he wants to put a hold on it. To wit, the Lord is the controller and master of Maya. So therefore, if a certain Jiva is able to please the Lord God by having Bhakti for him, by surrendering before the Lord and praying that he be liberated from the miseries and torments caused by Maya, the merciful and compassionate Lord immediately orders his Maya not to disturb his devotee. The result is that this Jiva, the devotee of the Lord God, finds freedom from the clutches of Maya, which in turn means he is freed from its shackling effects to find eternal freedom from the cycle of birth and death in this mortal and gross world. The blessed Jiva's soul gets emancipation and salvation; he attains eternal peace, bliss, felicity and beatitude.

Earlier in verse no. 86 we have already read that this world has been created by Maya.

These facts—(a) that this creation has been created by the Lord using his Maya Shakti, (b) that Maya keeps the creature entangled in this world and its web of delusions, and (c) that it is Bhakti only that helps the Jiva to break free from the clutches of Maya, and thereby obtain freedom from all miseries and torments caused by the latter—are clearly reiterated at different places in Ram Charit Manas.

For instance, in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 86, Lord Ram says: “My Maya has made it possible for this creation, along with all its creatures as well as its animate and inanimate aspects, to come into existence.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 89, we read that Kaagbhusund, the saintly crow, tells Garud, the celestial mount of Lord Vishnu, that: “I was blessed by Lord Ram with the glorious boon of Bhakti, and from that time Maya has had no effect upon me.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 44, we read that: “The Jiva remains trapped and roams endlessly in the cycle of transmigration for countless generations due to the effect of Maya. This Maya surrounds the Jiva from all sides so much so that it drives and controls all his deeds, thoughts, nature, qualities, characters traits and circumstances.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 45, we read that: “If you wish to have heavenly happiness and bliss right here in this world during your lifetime, then you must develop Bhakti for the Lord God. This is the best path shown by the Vedas and the Purans (ancient scriptures).”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 116, we read that: “Maya and Bhakti are both like maids of the Lord God; they serve him and are obedient to him. But Bhakti is favourite of the Lord, whereas Maya is just like a court dancer. Hence, Maya is afraid to annoy Bhakti. So if a person wants to please the Lord he must first have Bhakti on his side; then Maya would be easy to overcome or subdue.”

Another irrefutable fact that the Lord God cannot be attained by any method such as Yoga (meditation), Tapa (penance and austerity), Gyan (gnosis; acquisition of knowledge), Vairagya (renunciation, dispassion, detachment) etc., except by having love, affection and devotion for him, is also clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 62.

²Another important observation is that it is not the lack of Gyan that keeps the Jiva trapped in this world. All living beings have ‘life’ or ‘consciousness’ inside them,

otherwise they would be dead in the first place. The presence of consciousness inside a Jiva, the living being, ensures that it has awareness, it can experience, it can learn and make decisions, no matter that they are very basic and rudimentary. Even a single-cell organism such as an amoeba or bacteria shows rudimentary awareness of its surroundings, and it responds to external stimuli to show that it can think and decide how to react to a given situation. If this is the case with the lowest of creatures in the hierarchy of creation, one would certainly deduce that a human being who is the most evolved of all the creatures does possess certain higher level of knowledge and awareness. This means that a human being can't claim that he does not know what he is doing and what are the consequences of his deeds; he cannot say that he has not learnt any lesson by seeing how others are suffering from their misdeeds and evil actions; he cannot honestly say that he has found complete peace and bliss by remaining engaged in this world; and he cannot say that he has not realised that true happiness and peace is not to be found in this world but elsewhere, and that he is anxious to find out a way to break free from the endless cycle of miseries and torments in which he is trapped.

To wit, each single Jiva has some basic Gyan present in him, even if this Gyan is only rudimentary in nature, and not of high standard. So therefore, to say that Agyan, or lack of Gyan (knowledge of all shades, philosophical, spiritual or empirical; awareness), is at the root of the Jiva remaining trapped in this world and suffering from the miseries inflicted by it, will be a fallacious and erroneous proposition. The truth is that it is the lack of Bhakti that is at the root of the Jiva's predicaments and problems.

The remedy for the Jiva's spiritual ills and worldly problems is found in Bhakti—because it provides the Jiva with eternal peace, bliss and beatitude that no amount of Gyan or pursuance of any other path would ever do.

It is said in Vishnu Puran, 1/9/73, that a Jiva suffers from all sorts of wants, miseries, pain and grief only till the time he comes and surrenders himself before the Lord God, for the moment he does so all his torments vanish for good.

In this context, refer also to verse nos. 4-5 of this book.]

३ / २ / ७ त्रीण्येषां नेत्राणि शब्दलिङ्गाक्षभेदाद्रुद्रवत् ॥ ९९ ॥

3 / 2 / 7 trīṇyēṣāṃ nētrāṇi śabdaliṅgākṣabhēdādrudravat || 99||

(3/2/7) To understand the underlying Truth of anything in this world, all Jivas have three sorts of 'eyes'—i.e. they have three tools, means or methods by which they can understand the Truth (just like the three eyes of Lord Shiva) (trīṇyēṣāṃ nētrāṇi).

These three 'eyes' (tools; means; methods) are the following: (i) The wise words of the scriptures that enlighten him about the Truth of anything (śabda); (ii) By inference or drawing a conclusion from available evidence or knowledge of anything; by deducing the Truth of something intelligently (liṅga); and (iii) By seeing the concerned thing in physical form to know about its Truth; by actually employing one's sense organs of perception to know about anything (pratakṣa).

These three tools or methods help the Jiva to 'see' the Truth and separate it from falsehood just like Lord Shiva (rudravat) who is able to see the difference between the Truth and falsehood (bhēdād). (99)

[Lord Shiva is reputed to have ‘three eyes’. This is why he is also called ‘Trinnetrum’—the Lord with three eyes. His two conventional eyes represent the view of the world during the waking state and the dreaming state of consciousness that are respectively known as the ‘Jagrat’ and the ‘Swapna’ states of existence. His third eye is the ‘eye of wisdom’ that symbolises the ‘Turiya’ state of consciousness that corresponds to the transcendental state where the pure ‘consciousness’ alone exists.

Similarly, a person has three ways to learn about the Truth of anything. One method is that he studies the scriptures and has faith in their words. The second method is that he makes intelligent deductions based on analysis of available knowledge. The third method is to actually see things for himself and become convinced about the Truth.

A wise person would employ all the three methods according to his aptitude and necessity. Ultimately he must understand the universal Truth that real peace and happiness is found not in this gross mortal material world but in the spiritual realm; that if one wishes to attain eternal happiness and peace then it is only possible by pursuing the path of self-realisation and God-realisation because this path leads to the Jiva’s liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death, which in turn grants his soul eternity when it merges with the supreme Soul of this creation. This wisdom gives the Jiva a sense of bliss and happiness while he is still alive in this world, and at the time of death he finds eternal felicity and beatitude. To wit, ‘heaven’ becomes accessible to him right here in this world till he lives, and when he leaves his gross body he attains final deliverance, emancipation and salvation for himself.

Further, there are many prescribed methods to attain this spiritual goal—such as Yoga (meditation), Tapa (austerity and penance), Gyan (gnosis and knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment), Japa (repetition of holy Mantras), Dhyan (contemplation), Daan (charity), Yagya (sacrifices), and so on. But the best and the simplest method is the path of ‘Bhakti’—the path of having devotion, love and affection for the Lord God.

Srimad Bhagvad Geeta, 14/11, says: “When the light of wisdom and enlightenment dawns on the horizon of a person, both at the level of his mind as well as at the level of his senses, then only can he see the Truth and realise its dominance everywhere.”]

३ /२ /८ आविस्तिरोभावा विकाराः स्युः क्रियाफलसंयोगात् ॥ १००॥

3 /2 /8 āvistirōbhāvā vikārāḥ syuḥ kriyāphalasamyōgāt || 100||

(3/2/8) The concept of birth and death, or creation and destruction, is based on an error of understanding, a false perception of the reality, or a fallacious conception that the Jiva, who has not realised the ‘Truth’, has. [The Jiva who has not understood the Truth about his own ‘self’—that this ‘self’ is not the gross body but pure Consciousness known as the Atma or the soul, and that this ‘Consciousness’ is an eternal, immutable and universal entity. Hence there is no question of its taking a birth and dying. This Truth applies both at the macro level of creation as well as at the micro level.]

A wise Jiva would understand that the true cause of this Atma taking birth and dying to take a re-birth once again lies in the Theory of Karma which says, inter alia, that if one gets involved in doing deeds in this world then he is bound by its consequences, and this chain continues endlessly as the creature goes on doing one

deed after another in the hope of fulfilling all his desires which themselves are endless. Hence, once the Jiva allows himself to get involved in worldly deeds, he has fallen in a trap from which it is well nigh impossible to extricate oneself unless one is wise enough to see the 'Truth'. (100)

[The meaning is very clear. A wise person is one who realises that his true freedom lies in breaking the cycle of Karma by remaining detached from his deeds and their rewards. How is this possible in the physical world that relies on deeds to keep moving? The answer is that the wise person would offer all his deeds to the Lord God and think that he is just obeying the Lord's command. He is deemed to be serving the Lord selflessly, and therefore in spite of doing deeds he is deemed to be un-involved in them just like a faithful and obedient servant who carries out the orders of his master is not deemed to be the owner of the fruits or rewards that come as a result of anything done by him on the behalf of his master.

In this context, refer to verse nos. 64, 58, 75 and 91 also.

In short, a wise person takes the shelter of the supreme form of Bhakti as described at different places in this book Shandilya Bhakti Sutra in order to fulfil his spiritual aspirations. This is the Truth he must understand.]

समाप्तश्च तृतीयोऽध्यायः ॥ ३ ॥

इति श्रीशाण्डिल्यमहर्षिप्रणीतभक्तिसूत्रम्

samāptaśca tṛtīyō 'dhyāyaḥ || 3||

iti śrīśāṇḍilyamaharṣipraṇītabhaktisūtram

Thus ends Canto 3 of Shandilya Bhakti Sutra expounded by the illustrious, learned and enlightened sage Shandilya.

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Appendix

About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

Genre of Writing: Spiritualism, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Religious, Devotional and Theological.

The author's Books are available for order online both in 'e-book' format and 'paper-back book' format at following websites—

- (a) www.amazon.com (in their 'kindle' + 'paper-back book' versions),
- (b) www.pothi.com (in 'paper-back book' + 'e-book' versions),
- (c) www.draft2digital.com (in 'e-book' version) through the following platforms: (i) Apple (ibooks), (ii) Barnes & Noble (nook), (iii) 24 Symbols, (iv) Kobo, (v) Page Foundry, (vi) Scribd, (vii) Tolino etc.:-

List of Books that are currently available as mentioned above :-

- (A) (1) The Chariot of God: Dharma Rath; (2) OM and Naad; (3) YOGA—Its Practice and Philosophy according to the Upanishads; (4) Ram Geeta; (5) The Revelation of Creation—as envisioned in the Upanishads; (6) The Pentagon of Creation: As Expounded in the Upanishads; (7) The Triumvirate of Creation; (8) Maya: The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation; (9) Surdas-Ram Charitawali; (10-a) The legend of Lord Shiva: Book 1 'Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati'; (10-b) Book 2 'Lord Shiva's Sacred Hymns'; (10-c) Book 3 'Shiva's different names & their significance, Shiva Puran, Upanishads'; (11) the Mahavakyas of the Upanishads; (13) Lord Ram's marriage with Sita (based on Tulsidas' books "Ram Charit Manas", "Janki Mangal", "Ram Lala Nahachu" & "Geetawali", and sage Veda Vyas' book "Adhyatma Ramayan"; (14) "Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Stotras & Mantras of Lord Ram"; (15) "Vairagya Shatkam" of king-sage Bhartrihari; (16) An Anthology of the Sanyas Upanishads-Parts 1 and 2; (17) "Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan" or the "Aadi Ramayan" based on Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas; (18) The Legendary Glory of

Hanuman; (19) “Narad Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord; (20) “Shandilya Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord according to the illustrious sage Shandilya; (21) “Bhakti Sutra Mala”—A Garland of Spiritual Wisdom in the form of an Anthology of Aphorisms pertaining to Bhakti or devotion, love and affection for Lord God; (22) Glory of Lord Ram’s Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns; (23) Saints and Non-Saints: Their Distinguishing Characters and Qualities; (24) A True Guru (Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor); (25) “Sundar Kand” of Ram Charit Manas; (26) The Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka—Told in Slow Motion (based on, and will have the full relevant Text of, Ram Charit Manas, Adhyatma Ramayan, Anand Ramayan, Geetawali Ramayan, and Kavitawali Ramayan).

(B) Goswami Tulsidas Series: (1) Book 1- ‘Dohawali’; (2) Book 2- ‘Parvati Mangal’; (3) Book 3- ‘Kavitawali’; (4) Book 4- ‘Janki Mangal’; (5) Book 5- ‘Ram Lala Nahachu’; (6) Book 6- ‘Geetawali Ramayan’; (7) Book 7- ‘Vairagya Sandipani’; (8) Book 8- ‘Vinai Patrika’; (9) ‘Barvai Ramayan’.

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